

ROMAN STORIES;
OR, THE
H I S T O R Y
OF THE
SEVEN WISE MASTERS
OF
R O M E:

CONTAINING
SEVEN DAYS ENTERTAINMENT,
IN MANY
PLEASANT AND WITTY TALES, OR STORIES.

WHEREIN

The Treachery of evil Counsellors is discovered, Innocence
cleared, and the Wisdom of the Seven Wise Philosoph-
PHERS displayed.

Newly Corrected, better Explained, and Enlarged.

THE FIFTIETH EDITION.

L O N D O N:

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PREFACE

TO THE

READER.

WHEN ignorance, having, like a thick and dark cloud, overspread the eyes and intellects of most people, men were obliged to draw the rude multitude by such allurements of tales and fables as are contained in this BOOK, to give their attention to good instruction and the wholesome precepts of morality and virtue; that the fancy being attracted by the familiarity and delightfulness of such fabulous stories, the soul itself at the end, by often tasting the same nourishment, might be inclined to covet knowledge and understanding, and might grow quicker sighted, to behold the hidden and mystical wisdom contained in such obscure riddles.

The HISTORY itself is both ancient and moral and is penned in an easy and familiar stile, and for that reason we recommend it as most proper to initiate or introduce youth into the principles of sound literature and virtue; since it not only delights the fancy, and attracts the attention, but

also improves and cherishes the seeds of virtue in the soul; as will appear more largely by the moral, which bears the following signification:

The emperor may signify the world, who having but one son, (who is man) all his care is to give him good education: but man losing his own mother, (who is reason, or divine grace) and falling into the hand of a step-mother, (signifying sin) who is an empress of great cunning, and one that commands the world, she studies, by all possible means, the confusion of man, and would prevail with his weakness, but that a star from heaven, (by which is meant goodness from above) instructs man how to avoid the allurements of sin, by not opening his mouth to bid her welcome. And the better to prevent her intended mischief, he hath seven wise masters (which are the seven liberal sciences) to instruct him: so that being thus armed, man liveth to triumph over sin, figured in the death of the empress and her minion, and in the end, to gain a rich crown of glory and happiness, which is prepared for all those that in this life labour to attain by doing well.

This is the explanation or moral of the following delightful HISTORY; which if the reader makes a right use of, will be a rich and pleasant banquet to his soul.

And now, notwithstanding this history is stored with a variety of pleasant novels; yet to give a relishing taste of what is in the book, give me leave

to insert in the preface, the following instance of the cunning contrivances, and ready wickedness of lascivious women.

A story of an old gentleman that was cuckolded by his young wife.

AN old rich gentleman having married a young wanton lady, and being somewhat wanting in his nocturnal duty, she placed the affection due to him, on a soldier, and altho' she was careful to conceal her licentious passion, the old man being jealous soon perceived it; but to be more certain of what he doubted, he pretends a journey for some days, and taking money with him, away he goes.

This lady acquainted an old matron with her amours, who informed the soldier, that it was his good fortune to be beloved by such a lady; which pleased the soldier very well; and now having an opportunity by the old man's absence, he came in the evening to the gate, expecting admittance.

The husband unexpectedly returning home at night found the soldier at the gate, and suspecting the occasion, his suspicion was confirmed when he came into the house, and found a banquet prepared, and his wife ready to receive her champion. She was so surprized at her husband's appearance,

that she could not make him any reasonable answer to the many questions he propounded; which so enraged him, that he resolved to be revenged on her; which he thus effects, he stript her naked, and so led her to a pond, in the middle whereof he tied her fast to a post, thinking thereby to cool the heat that had occasioned her malady, and his jealousy.

The soldier, having staid at the gate a long time without admittance, goes to the old matron, and tells her his fruitless attendance. She wonders at it, and goes back with him to the house, and having a key, she enters the gate, and leaving the soldier in an outer court, went toward the house, where she saw the young lady in the pond, in the manner her husband left her.

After a short dialogue, whereby they both understood how the state of their affairs stood: the young lady having still a mind to enjoy her gallant, it was agreed that the old matron should unstrip, and stand in her stead, while she went to her lover. The young lady being dressed in the old woman's clothes, went to the soldier, who at first took her to be the matron; but being soon undeceived, he quickly enjoyed those pleasures they had so much desired.

The old man who was gone to bed, could not sleep for thinking of that night's adventure, and believing he was not sufficiently even with his wife, he resolves upon a farther revenge, and leaving his

bed, goes down to the place where he left his wife, and utters outrageous speeches against her, which the old woman, who was there, thought it was best not to answer, but to remain silent; at which he was so enraged, that having a knife in his hand, he took her by the nose, and cut it off, throwing it at her face, wishing her to present it to her lover, and so returns to bed.

Soon after, the lady having taken leave of her gallant, returns to the old woman; who tho' almost dead with her wound, gives her an account of her misfortune. She hears the story with admiration, esteeming herself doubly happy, in having enjoyed her friend's love, and escaped her husband's fury; and now she comforts the old woman by promising her a great reward. This pacified her; and the young lady believing that the worst was past, untied the old woman, and again took her place in the water; and having contrived how to manage the matter, so as to come off with honour, she thus played her trick.

Believing that her husband was within hearing, as indeed he was, she, with a mournful voice, makes a heavy complaint against him that had so wronged his innocent and chaste wife; and then she implores the assistance of Diana, and all the other goddesses of chastity, to be so gracious to her as to restore her to her former beauty; which her husband had deprived her of by cutting off her nose.

Having made this complaint and prayer, she continued for some time silent, and then of a sudden, broke out into loud exclamations of joy and thanksgiving to the heavenly powers, for her restoration, calling her husband to come and see this token of her innocence; he being amazed at her discourse, was resolved to know the truth, and rising out of his bed, lighted a candle, went down, and comes to his wife, and beholding her face, finds it whole and sound; whereat standing amazed, he began to detest his rashness, and fear heaven's vengeance; and deprecating the wickedness of his impious fury, he looseth his most chaste wife, and brings her again to his bed; and she by this means recovered both her nose, and the affections of her husband.

Having thus inserted this pleasant novel, as well to give the reader a taste of what is in this book, as to present him with a notable instance of the crafty intrigues of wicked women, we shall now detain the reader no longer, but refer him to the many pleasant novels contained in the book itself, and close this preface; bidding thee heartily farewell.



THE
HISTORY
OF THE
SEVEN WISE MASTERS
OF ROME.

CONTAINING
Many Pleasant and Witty STORIES, very
Delightful to Read.

HISTORY I.

The Emperor of Rome marries the daughter of the King of Lombardy, by whom he has a Son. The Empress falls sick, makes her request to the Emperor, and dies.

IN the great and flourishing city of Rome, reigned a famous Emperor, named Pontianus, who took to wife a very beautiful and virtuous lady, only daughter to the King of Lombardy, by whom he had a son, called Dioclesian, who was not only the hopes of his royal parents, but of the whole empire, giving in his childhood great tokens of a wise and gracious prince, and as improving in years, so in graces of mind and body.

But as fortune is constant in nothing but inconsistency, so she gave in a short time, a visible instance of her mutability, and a check to the joys and pleasures of the Emperor and the whole court: For scarce had the young prince attained to the age of seven years, when death, by a violent fever, summoned the Empress to his dark abodes; who finding no hopes of recovery, addressed herself to the Emperor in the following words:

O my dear lord, said she, I shall never recover from this grievous sickness! and therefore as nothing lies so much upon my spirits, next to the welfare of your majesty, as that of your young son, I have one request to make, which I hope you will not deny. (The Emperor having promised to refuse her nothing, the dying lady said), I am very sensible, my lord, that after my death it will be very convenient, for the good of your dominions to marry again, and as step-mothers do not always prove kind and affectionate to children that are not their own, I beseech you that my child may be educated and trained up in all manner of virtuous learning, out of the court, and not under her tuition.

The Emperor having promised punctually to fulfil her request, the Empress turning her head, soon after expired, leaving the Emperor and the whole court under unspeakable concern and grief: and they mourned for her many days.

HISTORY H.

How the Emperor committed his Son to Seven Wise Masters, to be instructed in learning.

AFTER the funeral obsequies of the Empress were solemnized, the Emperor began to think of performing her request, and to learn his son while he was young the art to govern himself, that he might be better able to take upon him, after his decease, the government of the empire. In order to this, he assembled the lords of his council, to give their advice in the matter; who unanimously answered, In Rome, my lord, are Seven Wise Masters, famous for their skill in all sorts of learning; let them be sent for, and deliver to them your son to be educated and instructed in arts and sciences.

The Emperor approving of their advice, sent a messenger to the Seven Wise Masters, to require them to hasten to his court without delay.

Whereupon they immediately come before the Emperor, who said, 'Sirs, I have but one son, and him I intend to commit to your care, to be instructed in all sorts of literature, so that he may be accomplished, and fit to govern the Roman empire after my decease; for which you shall receive all the encouragement and rewards that you may expect from my royal bounty and favour.



The Philosophers gladly undertook the charge, believing that they should gain great reputation, by reason of the majestic and docile spirit that appeared to be in the young prince. And the better to succeed in their endeavours, they made choice of a place without the city of Rome, pleasantly situated and adorned with fair fountains, murmuring springs and pleasant gardens; and every thing so commodious and delightful as rendered a continual harmony night and day.

HISTORY III.

The Emperor, by the advice of the princes and lords of his empire, marries another wife.

THE princes and principal senators of his empire then thought it necessary for to persuade the emperor to a second marriage, that the empire might not be without an heir, in case the young prince should die; and upon their humble representations, the Emperor condescended, and after some time, he was married to the daughter of the king of Castile, who was reputed to be accomplished with all princely endowments.

This new Empress behaved herself so well at first, that the Emperor forgot all the sorrow he had been under for the death of his first wife; and after they had lived some years without issue, the Empress hearing the Emperor had a son by his former wife, who was fair and beautiful, she fell in love with him, tho' unseen, and began to consider how to have him sent for home, in order to bring him to her lascivious appetite.

One night as the Emperor lay in his bed, he being more than ordinarily open in declaring the secrets of his heart, and his affections to his lady, she took that opportunity to press the matter to him, and desired him, as a mark of his love, not to deny her one favour.

The Emperor answered, That he would deny her nothing that was possible for him to perform. Whereupon the Empress said, My dear lord, you know I have no child by you; but my joy is this, you have a son, who is under tutorage of Seven Wise masters. Him I desire to have as my own son; and to that end, I beseech you to send for him, that I may have the consolation of his presence, and by my respect to him, shew my love to your majesty.

The Emperor, well pleased with this request, embraced the Empress, and replied, I have often had it in my thoughts to do as you advise me, and it is now sixteen years since I saw him; therefore your will shall be joyfully fulfilled. And the next morning a messenger was accordingly dispatched to the Seven Wise masters, with orders, that they should bring the prince home at the feast of Pentecost following.

HISTORY IV.

The Wise Masters consult the stars, to know whether it was proper to obey the Emperor's command.

THE Masters having understood the Emperor's pleasure, in the evening retired into the garden, and taking a view of the heavens, they perceived by one star, that the prince's journey to court would prove fatal; and yet by another little star, they saw, that if they did not conduct him to the Emperor at the time prefixed they should lose their heads.

And as they were sorrowfully deliberating what was best to be done, the young prince came unto them, and demanded the cause of their concern; they answered, Sir, we have received orders from your father, to conduct you home at the feast of Pentecost; whereupon we have consulted the stars, and find, that if at the time prefixed, we do obey the Emperor, it will endanger both your life and ours, and yet by another star we see, that we shall lose our heads, if we do not obey; then said the prince, let me also behold the firmament.

And when he had erected a scheme and considered the configuration of the planets, and the heavenly aspects, he told them, that he perceived by a little star, that if he could abstain from speaking seven days, he should save his own life and theirs also. Now, said the prince, ye are Seven Masters, so well accomplished in oratory and rhetoric, that it is an easy matter for you by your wisdom to save my life for seven days, and on the eighth I shall speak for myself, and save my life and yours likewise.

The Masters then, by diligent inspection, perceived their scholar was in the right; and admitted his wisdom and knowledge, which was much greater than their own: returning thanks to the Almighty for prospering their endeavours, which redounded not only to their own honour and advantage, but also to the glory and happiness of the Roman empire.

The Masters then, whose names were Poultilas, Lentulus, Craton, Malquedrake, Josephus, Cleophe, and Solon, respectively undertook each man his day, to intercede in behalf of the prince, and to plead for the preservation of his life, according to his own proposal and request.

HISTORY V.

The Emperor meets his Son with great solemnity, pomp and triumph.

THE Emperor being informed that his son was upon the road, commanded his princes and nobles to attend upon them in their proper habits and ornaments: and the Masters likewise understanding the coming of the Emperor, said to the young prince, it is best for us to leave your Highness, and go privately into the city, and consult of ways and means how we may act best for your service.

The prince answered only by a nod, signifying, that his dependance was upon Providence and in their wisdom in the desperate trial he was to undergo. And so they took their leaves of him, and went a private way to the city, leaving with him his attendants, to pursue his journey towards the court.

And when he was come within sight of the magnificent city of Rome, he espied the Emperor attended by all his nobles; whereupon the prince made his obeisance with all manner of respect and duty, but spake not a word; which the Emperor imputing unto bashfulness, having joyfully embraced and welcomed him, ordered him to ride on his right hand, and shewed him the magnificent attendance of princes and noble lords, he asked his opinion of the grandeur and majesty of his court and empire, expecting a pertinent answer, according to the great wisdom he was reputed to be endued with.

But the prince remembering the silence that he was to keep, to avoid the malignity of the planets, answered not one word, which the Emperor and nobles admired at, expecting that every word he should say would be sentenced.

The Empress hearing that the young prince was come, apparelled herself very richly, going into the hall with her

retinue, sat down by him, and asked the Emperor, if this was his son, that was educated by the Seven Wise Masters? he replied, that he was his son; but to his great surprize, he answered nothing to all the questions he asked of him.

The Empress said, that his silence must be imputed to some unaccountable cause, the which she would undertake to discover and remedy, if that the prince might be permitted with her into some private apartment, without any company or attendance.

HISTORY VI.

The Empress strives to ensnare the prince. He rejects all her temptations. She cries out for help, pretending he would have ravished her.

THE lascivious Empress, without losing one moment after she was come into her chamber, shut the door, and then taking the prince by the hand, she made him sit down by her on the bed side, and said, my beloved prince, I have heard much of your wit and beauty, and now am glad to see that which my heart so much delighted in; it was I that caused your father to send for you, that I might enjoy you; and now, let me tell you, that for your sake I have kept my virginity to this day: therefore let us lie down together, and enjoy one another.

These, and many other such like enticements, the Empress used; but was not able to move that integrity of the prince, nor provoke him to answer one word: whereupon the Empress said, Why do you not speak to me? O dear prince! thou object of my best affection, speak to me: if you have resolved to be silent to all others, methinks you might speak to me. What do you fear? remove all fear, and tell me the cause of your silence, and let me alone to excuse you. Speak my dear, Why are you so cruel? if you are young, I for my part am in the flower of my age, and if you are fair, there is not a lady in Rome that can equal me for beauty. Why do you not remove your eyes from the ground? look upon me my prince.

Having said this, she embraced him in a very ardent manner, and said, I beg of you, my dear, to speak at least one

word, let it be what it will. Do not despise me, who am ready to die for you; I lose my speech; alas, my heart fails me: behold me at your feet imploring your love! what steel, rock, or marble, so hard, as would not be softened with these entreaties! I who once thought I could mollify the most savage and cruel nature of all the universe, must now find myself slighted by you!

The prince remaining silent and immoveable, the Empress brought him pen, ink, and paper, and said, O my dear prince, if you please not to consent to me by speech, behold here is pen, ink, and paper, write, and let me know, whether I may hereafter depend upon your love.

Then taking the pen, he wrote as follows:

O lady, God forbid that I should defile a vessel consecrated to my father's use: in doing which I should greatly sin against the Almighty, and also incur the malediction of my father: therefore, from henceforth desist, I beseech you, from tempting me to such incestuous wickedness.

When the Empress had read the writing, filled with rage and malice she tore it with her teeth, rent her cloaths and head attire, and scratched her face, crying out with a loud voice, *Help! help! my lords, help me! lest this lewd and wicked traitor ravish me.*

HISTORY VII.

The Empress accuses the prince of endeavouring to commit incest with her. He is condemned to death; but respited at the instance of his nobles.

THE Emperor being in the hall, and hearing the Empress cry out so violently, ran towards her chamber, with many of his nobles following him, to know what was the matter: to whom the Empress cried, O my lord, do me justice, behold this traiterous son of yours, the most debauched that ever sin and heat put strength into; see the fruits of the good doctrine which the traitor hath learned, not to vouchsafe to answer the least word to the questions you demanded of him, and yet without shame, to ask that of me which is not lawful to think or speak of; and because I

would not consent, he has made my face all bloody, torn my vesture, and the ornaments of my head; and if you had not come in, as you did, he had forced me to his wicked and libidinous appetite.

When the Emperor heard this, filled with rage, he caused a council immediately to be called, and being seated on his throne, he passed sentence of death upon his son; commanding, that within three hours he should be put to the most cruel and most ignominious death that could be imagined.

The lords and nobles hearing that sentence of death was passed on the prince, told the Emperor, that the law was ordained for transgressors; and that if the prince must be put to death, it ought to be done according to form of law, lest it should be said, that the Emperor in his wrath, without law, or justice, had put to death his only son.

The Emperor approving of this advice, commanded him to be put in prison, till judgment was legally given against him.

HISTORY VIII.

The Empress being grieved that the prince is respited, incites the Emperor to put him to death, by the story of a medicinal tree, lopt down for the sake of a young plant that came to nothing.

WHEN the Empress understood, that the prince was not put to death, she retired into her apartment very disconsolate: and when night came, the Emperor entering into her chamber to go to bed, found her full of grief; to whom he said, My dear lady, what is it that makes you so uneasy? she answered, You see how your accursed son hath shamed and dishonoured me, and tho' you pronounced sentence of death upon him, yet it is not executed, and he still lives for to shame me, and to be a reproach upon my honour and virtue.

The Emperor replied, Leave off this immoderate trouble; I will surely revenge your cause in as ample a manner as you can wish, and to-morrow he shall die by the law.

Then said she, Must he live so long? it may perhaps happen to you as it did to a burges in Rome, who had a tree

of great virtue: What tree was that? said the Emperor, and what happened about it? to which the Empress replied in the following

EXAMPLE.

IN the city of Rome lived a burgesse who had a stately garden, in which was a tree that every year brought forth fruit of such extraordinary virtue, that whosoever eat thereof, was cured of all his maladies or diseases.

It happen'd that from the root of the tree sprung a sucker so beautiful, that gentleman was very much delighted with it; hoping, by this means, in process of time, that it would become as useful as the old one.

The tree grew well at first; but being grown up a pretty height, the branches of the old tree kept the sun from it, so that it did not thrive; which the gentleman observing, ask'd the gardener the reason thereof; who answer'd that the boughs of the great tree kept the sun and air from it.

Whereupon the burgesse order'd him to lop off the branches of the old one; which the gardener accordingly perform'd.

Another time, the burgesse coming again to see the young plant, and perceiving that still it did not thrive, said to the gardener, what hinders its growth now? he replied, I suppose the height of the old tree shades it from the sun and rain, and therefore it cannot grow; then said the master, hew down the old tree to the ground; for if this sucker I hope to have a better tree than ever that was.

This the gardener likewise immediately executed; but no sooner was the old tree hew'd down, than the young plant wanting the natural moisture and nutriment which it drew from the old one utterly perished: and thus was this tree which had been of such excellent use and virtue, entirely destroyed, for which, both the burgesse and his advisers gain'd the curses of all the poor, who by the benefit of this tree were constantly cured of their diseases.

The empress having thus ended her example, proceeded to make an answer thereto, by the way of moral, as follows:

M O R A L.

“ This tree, my lord, said she, is an emblem of your noble person, by whose justice and bounty, many poor, sick and blind people are much comforted and restored, and the young sucker, or plant which grew under the great tree, is your accursed son, who now begins to grow in cunning and artifice, and studies first, how he may lop off the boughs and arms of your might, and insinuate himself into the favor of the people; and then most unnaturally and wicked, imagines to destroy your sacred life, to make room for himself to reign. But what shall be the consequence? All poor and feeble persons shall curse them who might have destroyed your son, and did not do it. Therefore I advise you, while you have the power in your own hands, to put him to death, lest the curses of the people fall upon you.”

Then said the emperor, your counsel is very good, and to shew you my approbation thereof, to-morrow my son shall surely die.

Accordingly the next day, the emperor sat in judgment, and commanded his officers to lead the prince to execution, with trumpets sounding before him, in token of death.

H I S T O R Y IX.

Pontillas, the first master, stops the execution of the prince, by the history of a dog, which saved his master's Son from being destroyed by a serpent; yet nevertheless by a false representation of a woman, was killed, to the great grief of his master.

THE sun was hardly risen next morning, when those to whom the execution of the prince was committed, had provided all things necessary thereunto.

Whereupon Pontillas, the first master, came and spoke to the officer to delay the execution, for that he hoped, by the grace of God, to deliver the prince from death; and then he hasten'd unto the palace, and kneeling before the emperor, desir'd the favor to be heard what he had to say in behalf of the prince.

The emperor answer'd and said, “ I deliver'd my son to you to be well educated, and now you have debauched his

morals, and brought him home dumb, and so lewd, that he has endeavoured to defile his father's bed; therefore assure yourselves that he shall die first, and none of you shall long survive him."

Pontillas replied, "My lord, your majesty, I hope, will do nothing rashly, or unworthy your great prudence. It is incredible to me, that the prince would have ravished the empress, for I must assure your majesty, that for the space of sixteen years, which he has been amongst us, we have never perceived any thing but virtue and innocency in all his actions and behaviour; and therefore, I beseech you, in this important case, not to give way so much to anger as to execute your only son, barely for the accusation of a woman, lest it should happen to you worse than it did to a knight, who, through the words of his wife, killed his grey-hound that saved the life of his son."

The emperor desiring to hear the story, Pontillas answered that he was ready to obey his majesty, provided he would recal his son, and defer the execution till the next day. To which the emperor assenting, Pontillas began as follows:

E X A M P L E.

IN Rome there lived a gentleman that had but one son, who was carefully nursed in his house. He had also a grey-hound so good, that he never ran at any game but he took it; besides some other extraordinary qualities, that his master much admired him for.

It happened one day, that there was a running at tilt and tournament, in the public place appointed for that purpose, to which this gentleman, amongst others resorted: and, no sooner was he gone, but his lady, with her maidens also, went to see it; the nurse also, to satisfy her curiosity, went privately, and left the child lying in the cradle, in the hall, and the grey-hound in the room.

The gentleman's house being out of repair, in the very room where the child was, issued out of a hole a great and horrible serpent, which approaching the cradle, with all speed to slay the child, the grey-hound perceived it, and flew at the serpent to preserve the child; and so furious was the engagement, that the cradle was overturned with the child in it, the bottom upwards; but without any harm to the child, because the cloaths fell underneath, and the cradle fell on the four pummels.

The dog being enraged, as well at the wounds he received of the serpent, as the wrong designed his young master, fell with redoubled fury upon the serpent, and at last remained victorious, tearing the serpent in such a manner, that he was all besmeared with his blood, and then he laid himself down in his place, and licked his wounds.

Not long after this, the tilting being ended, the nurse came into the chamber, and saw the cradle turned upside down, compassed round about with blood, and the grey-hound likewise all bloody; and without looking any further, tore her clothes in a fright, with outrageous cries, carried the sad news to her lady, that the grey-hound had slain the child.

Hereupon, the mother, full of despair and grief for the loss of her only son, likewise rent her clothes, and broke out into dismal exclamations, and her maidens who had accompanied her, adding to the lamentation, made the whole house ring; and yet not any of them had the wit to go and turn the cradle up to see what had happened, continuing their outcries till the gentleman returned from the tournament; to whom the lady, with tears and aggravations, related what she had imagined by the nurse's discourse.

The knight hearing these sad tidings, full of rage and grief, went into the hall; where meeting the poor grey hound, which came leaning upon him, as he used to do, and seeing him all bloody, he immediately concluded, that all they had told him was true; and drawing out his sword, he run him quite through the wind-pipe and neck, so that the poor dog fell down dead at the feet of his mistaken master. No sooner had the angry knight done this, but he went and took up the cradle, and there he found his son alive and well, and seeing then the slaughtered serpent, which no body had minded before, he perceived the grey hound had killed the serpent in defence of the child: whereupon being full of grief, he sorrowfully cried out, 'Ah, poor dog! that thy friendship and loyalty should be so unfortunate to thee, to cause thy death, instead of recompence, which thou didst deserve for preserving my little child.'

And saying this, he broke his sword in pieces, and went towards the Holy Land, and abode there all the days of his life; and all this was occasioned by giving too much credit to the words of a rash woman.

M O R A L.

Pontillas, having thus ended his example, said, The moral or applications of what has been said, my lord, is, that this will be your own case, if you give credit to the words of your wife; and therefore, as your majesty's dutiful subject, I must humbly advise you, not to be swayed by prejudice or passion, but let the cause be examined into; for if the gentleman had but inquired into the matter deliberately, he had not killed his grey-hound for the report of his wife.

The emperor gave such attention to the example and advice of the philosopher, that he put a stop to the execution of the prince until further orders. And thus was the prince preserved the first day.

H I S T O R Y X.

The empress, by the story of a wild boar, that was slain by the deceit of the herdsman, persuades the emperor to execute the prince.

WHEN the empress understood that the prince was reprieved from execution, she went to the emperor, weeping bitterly, complaining, 'That he shewed the little esteem he had for her honour and his, by retarding justice; and, that she did not question, but he would be convinced of his error, by fatal experience, when it would be too late, because he gave so much ear to the flattery and deceit of the philosophers, who would certainly be his ruin; as it happened to the wild boar; who was destroyed by the flattery of a herdsman or shepherd.

The emperor desiring to hear the example, the empress replied, I shewed you one before, but see no effect it had; nevertheless, I will obey you again, and relate this example to you. And so saying, she began as follows:

E X A M P L E.

IN the great and spacious forest of Ardennes, was a wild boar, so cruel and fierce, that he devoured many people; whereupon the king caused a proclamation to be published

throughout his dominions, that whoever could slay the boar, should have his only daughter in marriage, and after his decease his kingdom.

Notwithstanding this great reward, it was a long time before any man was found who had courage enough to encounter the boar. But at last a shepherd or herdsmen undertook the task, encouraging himself, that if he happened to die in the engagement, there was an end put to a troublesome and necessitous life; but if he succeeded, he should raise himself and his family for ever to great riches and grandeur.

Being fired with these thoughts and resolutions, he took his shepherd's staff, and went to the forest; but no sooner had he entered therein, but the boar espied him, and running directly towards him, the shepherd to avoid his fury climbed up into a tree. The boar enraged that he could not come at him, began to gnaw the tree with his dreadful tusks, in so violent a manner, that the shepherd trembled, being extremely afraid that he would have overthrown it. But it luckily happening that the tree being loaded with fruit, the shepherd gathered some of it, and threw to the boar; which greedily devoured the same, and eat so much, that he quite gorged himself and lay down under the tree in order to sleep.

The cunning shepherd watching his opportunity, descended the tree by little and little, and knowing the nature of swine, with one hand he clawed the boar, and with the other held himself about the tree. The boar pleased with being thus tickled, turned up his belly, and the shepherd continuing scratching of him, he fell asleep. Then the shepherd resolving to make sure work, drew out his knife and cut his throat; and afterwards cutting off his head, he carried it to the king who according to his promise, gave him his only daughter, in whose right, after his decease, he was made king.

M O R A L.

Then said the empress, 'The mighty boar is an emblem of your mighty person, whom no man by force and open strength can withstand. The shepherd, with his staff, represents your wicked son, who with the staff of cunning already begins a plot against your honour and dignity. As the herdsmen tickled the boar asleep, and then killed him; so the masters of

your son tickle your fancy with fables and flattery, till at last they will take away your life, that your wicked son may reign.

The emperor replied, ' God forbid that they should serve me as the shepherd served the wild boar ; therefore to prevent it, my son shall certainly die to morrow.' At this the empress departed very joyfully and well contented.

HISTORY XL.

Lentulus, the second master, preserves the prince by the story of a woman that caused her husband to be set in the pillory unjustly.

THE second master, named Lentulus, hearing that the emperor had ordered his son to be executed, immediately hastened to him, and said, ' My gracious lord, if you put your son to death for the words of your wife, it will happen to you worse than it did to a certain knight, who through the treachery of his wife, was unjustly set upon the pillory.

The emperor being desirous to hear that example, Lentulus insisted that a stop should be first put to the execution of the prince; to which the emperor consenting, he thus began:

EXAMPLE.

IN the famous city of Mantua lived an ancient knight, who married a beautiful young wife, whom he loved above all earthly things; but lest his age not concurring with the expectations of her more vigorous youth, should incline her to incontinence, and encourage her in a lawless flame, he was not wanting to do all in his power to confine her within his house; and every night he locked the gates with his own hands, and secured the keys under his bed head.

But notwithstanding all the precautions and care of the old knight, his young wife found means to meet her gallant, and supply his defect, by taking the keys from under his bed's head, when he was fast asleep, and opening the door, went to her paramour: and having enjoyed one another to mutual satisfaction, she returned, and laying the keys where she found them, silently crept into bed to her husband.

But after she had frequently thus pursued her unlawful amours without being discovered, at last her husband happening to

awake, when she was gone to prosecute her accustomed delights, and missing his wife, he felt for the keys: but not finding them, he got up, and went to the door, which he found only on the lock; and then bolting it, he returned to his chamber, and looked out of the window to see what time she returned.

Now we must observe, that in the same city was a law, that at a certain hour in the night, a bell was rung, after which, if either man or woman was found in the streets, they were detained in prison till the next morning, and then put into the pillory, as objects of shame and derision unto all beholders.

When it was very late, or rather early, his wife came from her gallant, but found the door bolted against her; however, she took the boldness to knock. The good old knight looking out at the window, and seeing it was his wife, reproached her in the following manner; 'O thou wicked and unchaste woman! said he, have I found thee out; how often may I conclude thou hast committed adultery, and defiled thy marriage bed! assure thyself, lascivious creature, that thou shalt stand there till the ringing of the bell, that the watch may seize thee, and thou mayest meet with the punishment due to thy abominable perfidiousness and adultery.

She answered in an humble, dissembling tone, why does my dear lord and husband thus unjustly charge me with a wicked crime, which my known chastity abhors from my soul; God is my witness, I am innocent of this grievous accusation; for if you will know the truth, I was sent for by my mother, who was taken dangerously ill; and you being fast asleep, I was loth to awake you, and so with all possible silence I arose, and taking the keys, I opened the door, and went, as my duty obliged me to my sick mother, whom I found so very ill, that I fear she cannot live till morning; but for all that, my affection is so great to you, that I came away, and left a dying mother, to return to a dear and loving husband; wherefore I beseech you, for the love of God, let me in, and do not for my great affection to you, expose me to shame and disgrace.

These plausible pretences did not prevail upon the old knight, who justly looked upon her as guilty of adultery and falsehood, and therefore he absolutely refused to let her in. Hereupon she reminded him, what a disgrace it would be, were she taken by the watch, not only to herself, but to him, and all their relations; using besides all the arguments her subtle invention could imagine necessary to prevail upon him; but finding all her prayers to no purpose, and that he remained inexorable, she bethought

herself of a stratagem, which she prosecuted after the following manner.

My lord, said she, you know that by this door there is a well; if you let me not in, I will drown myself to avoid the shame that is coming upon me and my friends.

As the old gentleman was going about to reprove her further, and to threaten her, in hopes to deter her thereby from the like practices for the future, and then intending to let her in, and out of his great love and good nature, to forgive her; the moon went down, and the night was obscured with darkness more than usual. Overjoyed at this advantage, she pursued her stratagem, and with an audible voice, and a dismal tone, she thus expressed herself:

• That I may die like a Christian, I will make my last will; and first, I bequeath my soul to heaven, and my body to the earth; but all other worldly goods whatever, I bequeath to my dear husband, for him to dispose of as he shall think convenient.

Having thus finished her pretended will, she went to the well; and there finding a great stone, she took it in her arms, and lifting it up, cried out, now I drown myself! and so threw the stone into the well, squealing after it very artfully, to make her husband the more readily believe it was her. This done she slept softly and hid herself behind the door again.

Her stratagem had its desired effect; for the good old knight verily believing that his wife had been as good as her word, ran hastily down to the well, making a lamentable outcry all the way, from his great tenderness to her.

Now observe the perfidiousness and crafty contrivance of this wicked woman, to turn the tables upon her too indulgent husband; for though before she had injured him in the highest degree imaginable, yet now she makes him suffer publicly for her scandalous crimes; and instead of a reparation to his abused honour, she by the falsest accusations and most complicated wickedness, procures him to be punished in the pillory as a debauched person, for her adulteries, and thereby at once clears herself, be revenged on her innocent husband for threatening her before, and all this at the price of her reputation and good name.

The old knight was no sooner out, but she got in, and having locked the doors, went up into the chamber, and looked out of the window, as he had done before: and having a long while heard the good old man grievously lament for her supposed loss, and condemning himself for too much rigour, laughing all the

time at him, for his indulgence and love ; she at last in opprobrious terms, called out to him, reproaching him in the vilest manner imaginable, calling him lecherous dotard, and upbraiding him with slighting her, and going continually out on nights after harlots.

The good old man was so overjoyed to hear his wife was alive, that he valued not what she said ; and desiring her to have a better opinion of him, he begged her to open the door, and passing by all they would be good friends.

But all his prayers and intreaties availed nothing, she vowed he should stay till the watch came, that he might deservedly suffer, as he had threatened her before. The knight in his own vindication, pleaded that it was an improbable thing, that he should be guilty of such vices, seeing his advanced years rendered him unqualified for the delights of love ; alledging further, that out of pure affection to her, he was now in the streets ; and therefore desired her not to let him suffer shamefully.

She confidently answered, That it was God's goodness that he had given him time to repent ; and therefore he ought to be thankful, and suffer patiently.

The knight replied, That God was merciful, and required nothing more of a sinner, than that he should repent of his sins past, and amend his life, therefore, dear wife, said he, I beg of you to let me in.

She said, Who the devil made you so good a preacher ? but for all that, you come not in here. And as he was studying some new persuasions to prevail upon her to let him in, the watch came, and finding him in the streets, demanded what he did there at that unreasonable time of night ? reminding him withal, that he had broke the law of the city, and though he was an ancient inhabitant thereof, that could not excuse him from suffering according to the nature of the offence.

His wife hearing these words, cried out to the watch-men, Now is the time, honest men, for you to avenge me of that adulterer, who is so insatiate in his lust, that he never fails at night to forsake my bed, and follow his strumpets. In hopes of reformation, I have patiently forbore him a great while, but nothing will reclaim him, slighting my youth, and continuing still in his wicked whoredoms ; therefore now punish him according to his deserts, that he may be made an example to all such detestable lechers as he is. Accordingly he was carried to prison, and he next morning shamefully stood in the pillory.

M O R A L.

Now, said the master to the emperor, have you minded well the story? and he said, yes. Then said the master, If you execute your son, through the instigation of your wife, your condition may prove more unfortunate than the knight's.

Whereupon the emperor condemned the baleness of the woman, and said, That for that very cause Dioclesian should not die. The master having applauded his resolution, and humbly thanked him for it, he departed.

H I S T O R Y XII.

The empress, by the story of a son that cut off his father's head, and killed his mother, persuaded the emperor to execute Dioclesian.

WHEN the empress understood that the prince was not dead, she wept bitterly, and upbraided the emperor for the little love that he seemed to have for her, and his unsettled mind, by giving heed to every windy fable of the wise masters; who by their gilded counterfeit expressions, tossed him to and fro, as chaff before the wind; asking if ever he read any history, that the execution of a sentence, pronounced by the emperor himself, was retarded as this is now. Yet, however, says she, I will discharge my conscience, being assured, that in the end you will find all my sayings were to preserve your life and honour: whereas, others only aim at your utter ruin and destruction, as it happened to a treasurer in Egypt, who, by following the dictates of his son, both he and his wife died miserably.

Then the emperor desired her to relate the story; she replied, I will my lord; and accordingly began as followeth:

E X A M P L E.

IN Rome there lived a knight, who took such pleasure in hunting, gaming, and profuse living, that he came to great poverty and want; and then he advised with his son, what way they should take, whereby they might subsist, and brave it among their companions as formerly. The son, whose extravagancies had been as great as the father's, told him, he had thought on a way, if he would be ruled by him, by which their

wants might be supplied: the knight was very desirous to be informed. The way, says the son, is this:

The emperor Octavian abounds in gold and silver, which is piled up in a great tower, let us contrive how to come at it, by breaking through the wall, which is easy to effect. This pleased the father, who said, I like this project very well. And to that end, having prepared instruments for their purpose, he and his son entered one night into the tower where the treasure lay, and having loaded themselves with gold and silver, returned through the hole they had made; and stopping it up, made the earth plain as it was before, to prevent its being discovered. Then they returned home, being jolly, and living as profusely as ever, resolved to take the same course again, if they heard no noise of their robbery.

Now the keeper of the tower at last mis'd some of the treasure, and looking diligently about, perceived the hole that was made through the wall; whereupon he began to consider if it were possible to inttrap the thieves; and for that purpose, he made a great cauldron, and fill'd it full of pitch, bird lime, and such like stuff, and placed it at the hole, that gave entrance into the tower; so that no man could come in at the hole, but he must unavoidably fall into the cauldron, and it would forcibly retain him.

Now, it was not long ere the knight and his son had spent all their gold and silver, and hearing no noise about the robbery, concluded to carry away more money, and to that end made choice of a night very dark, and went to the place where they had entered before, and the father entering first into the hole, fell into the vessel up to the neck, and was so fastened that he could not stir, so presently concluded it was a plot for his surprise; and therefore advised his son to beware, lest he should be caught too; what must be done then, said the son, to get you out?

The father replied, son, for the safeguard of our honour, cut off my head, to the end that they may not know my body, and that the name of our family may not be defamed. The son considering, that of two evils, the least was to be chosen, severed his head from his body, and having interred it privately, he returned home, and with tears related the whole matter; beseeching his mother and sisters to forbear crying, for that would be a means of discovering what was yet hidden to the world.

The next day the treasurer, according to his usual custom, went to the treasury, and finding in his trap a body without

a head, was amazed ; and went and told the king all that had passed. Upon which it was concluded that the body should be tied to a horse's tail, and drawn through the streets of the city, and at every house the crier should proclaim, " This is the body of the chief which robbed the king's treasury : " and if they heard any weep, they might conclude he belonged to that house.

The king's servants did so, and at length they came against the house of its abode, at the sight whereof, the mother and daughters could not refrain weeping ; whereupon an officer ran into the house, and demanded the cause of their weeping. The villainous son, who was very subtil, took up suddenly a hatchet, and therewith, in an instant, wounded his mother in the leg ; and then replied, " Our lamentation is occasioned by our mother's being so dangerously wounded by a mischance.

The officer upon this suspected nothing, but answered, that they had better endeavour to help her, than cry and lament for her ; so took their leave. In a short time after, the wound festered, and threw the mother in a fever, which deprived her of life ; so the villainous son, with his hands killed both father and mother.

M O R A L.

Then said the empress, God grant the like befall not you ; for I am afraid you will be reduced to the same danger that this knight fell into. The knight followed the evil council of his son, so lost his honour and his life : the knight's son slew his father and his mother, and I fear Dioclesian will do the same by you, and that we shall be in danger of life and honour, unless you open the eyes of your understanding ; which I heartily move you to for the preservation of the imperial crown and dignity.

The emperor said, " You have given me a good example, and I shall take care to prevent him serving us as the wicked son served his father and mother ; and therefore to-morrow my son shall die."

HISTORY XIII.

Craton, the third master, prevents the execution of Dioclesian, by shewing the falshood of a woman, which caused her husband to kill his magpye that told the truth.

CRATON, the third master, hearing that the prince was ordered to be executed, in great haste came before the emperor, and made his reverence to him. The emperor being angry, demanded of him, how he durst appear before him, especially at a time so improper? and in an ironical manner, says, "Is this the rare doctrine you have taught my son, to solicit his mother-in-law to debauchery, and to attempt to force her?"

The philosopher answered, "That as to his being lewd, he could not believe it, and therefore desired his majesty to consider that there is no malice comparable to a woman's, as he could prove by a good example of a burges who killed his magpye through the deceit of his wife."

The emperor desiring to hear the story, having suspended the death of his son, Craton related it in the following manner,

EXAMPLE.

THERE lived in a certain city of Rome a rich burges, who had a magpye, which he loved so well, that he taught her to speak; so she might tell him all that she saw and heard.

This burges was married to a young wife, much more beautiful than honest: he loved her very well, but she requitted it with slight and disrespect, and made choice of a gallant in her husband's absence, to gratify her lustful appetite; which the magpye observing, told her master at his coming home; so that the report thereof spread itself through the whole city.

Her husband thereupon upbraided her with disloyalty and adultery ; to which she said, she was innocent, and that he was to blame to believe his magpye, and that as long as he continued so to do, there would be nothing but variance and discord betwixt them. But he replied, the pye could not lie, for that she saw and heard what she told him ; and therefore he would believe her rather than his wife.

It happened not long after, that the burges travelled abroad, and was no sooner gone, but she sent to advise her friend he should come secretly to her that night, to enjoy her as he was accustomed : Being come, as he entered into the house, he said, Dearest, I am afraid the magpye will discover us ! but she bid him not fear, for it was dark, and therefore the pye could not see them. The pye hearing this, said, It is true, I see you not, but I can hear you, and know that you are naughty together, which I shall tell my master when he comes home. At which the young man was startled ; but she bid him be of good courage, and she would be revenged of the pye. So they went and lay together till about midnight, at which time the adulteress arose, and calling her maid-servant, commanded her to fetch a ladder, which they set up to the roof of the house, and then they made a hole therein just over the pye, through which they cast down water, gravel, and small stones, and the like ; in-
somuch that the poor pye was almost killed.

Upon the burges's return, he went to visit his pye, asking how she fared in his absence ; the pye replied, " Master, I shall satisfy you in both.

" First I have the old news to tell you, that is, that you are a cuckold ; for the very night after your departure, your wife entertained a young man all night in bed with her, notwithstanding I told them I would inform you thereof : as to my welfare, that very night I had like to have died, it was so tempestuous, either raining, hailing, or snowing all the night."

The wife hearing this, said to her husband, " You have hitherto believed in the pye ; now, she saith, she had like to have died with rain, hail, and snow, that she accused me of adultery, whereas there was never any thing clearer but my innocency." The good man, to be satisfied of the truth, enquired of the neighbours, whether that night was fair or

soul? Who all affirmed, no night could be fairer. Then going to his wife, he acknowledged the fault of his cruelty, and after that went to the pye, and having railed at her for sowing discord between man and wife, he wrung her neck off; the wife at the sight hereof was overjoyed; and when he had killed the pye, he looked up, and saw a ladder, and a vessel of water, sand, and stones, which made him soon perceive the treachery of his wife; at which he grew so troubled, that for the words of his wife he had killed the pye, that he sold off all he had, and went on pilgrimage.

M O R A L.

Now, said the master to the emperor, Was not this a false and wicked woman, by deceit and craft to cause the pye to be slain? The emperor answered, it is very true, and I pity the poor pye that she should die for her fidelity; and for the sake of this example, my son shall not die. The master commending the prudence of the emperor, took his leave; having first recommended him to the protection of the Almighty.

H I S T O R Y XIV.

The empress persuades the emperor to execute Dioclesian, by a story of an emperor that was blind thro' the contrivances of seven wise masters; and how he was restored to his sight, by Merlin's advising him to cut off their heads.

WHEN the empress heard that the princeſs was not dead, she fretted like one bereft of her senses; whereupon the emperor demanded the cause of her lamentation. "My lord, said she, you cannot be ignorant of the cause, knowing how I have been abused by your son, as is visible by the bloody marks that are upon my tender flesh; and you promised me, he should die for my own sake, but more for yours, fearing that you will be reduced to the same condition of a certain emperor of Rome, who was blind by hearkening to seven wise Masters."

Then said the emperor, my dear lady, shew me that example, that it may be a caution to me; for though, in my clemency, I gave one day's respite to my son, it does not follow that I gave him his life; for what is deferred is not forgiven. She said then, she would gladly tell him that story for his caution, and began as followeth:

E X A M P L E.

THERE was in the city of Rome seven wise masters, who chiefly governed the empire, and perceiving the emperor never acted any thing without their advice, ordered it so by their art, that the emperor should see whilst he was in his palace, but when he went out of it, he should be blind, that they might the more securely manage state affairs, and by this means they enriched themselves much.

Now it happened, that when they had wrought this experiment, they could never dissolve it afterwards; but the emperor continued blind, when he went out of his palace.

Another way they had to enrich themselves—thus:

They proclaimed throughout the empire, that they could interpret dreams; or resolve any difficult questions off hand, requiring a guinea for their pains; by which, and other unjust means, they grew richer than the emperor himself.

One day as the emperor sat at table with the empress, he began to sigh, which she perceiving, demanded the cause; the emperor said, It is not a sufficient cause of grief to me that I have been so long blind, when I am out of my palace, and can find no remedy?

The empress said, My lord, take my advice, I beseech you, which is this: In your court you have seven wise masters, who govern you and the empire at their pleasure, and I verily believe are the cause of your blindness; and if so, they deserve to die a most shameful death; therefore first tell them your infirmity, and threaten them upon pain of death, that they find out a speedy remedy for your blindness.

Accordingly the emperor sent for the masters, and charged them upon pain of death, to find a present remedy to

restore his sight; they desired fifteen days to give an answer, the emperor granted it: Then they consulted how they might restore him to his sight again, but not being able to effect it, they resolved to seek throughout the kingdom for a remedy, and as they were passing along the city, they espied some children playing, and looking upon them, a man came hastily after them with a guinea in gold, and said, " Good masters, I desire you to tell me the meaning of a dream I had last night."

One of the children that played among the others, whose name was Merlin, hearing this, said to him, I will expound your dream without taking any of your gold from you, and also tell you your dream without first acquainting me with it. Last night you dreamed, that sitting in your cellar, you became so dry, that all the drink in your house could not quench your thirst; whereupon a fountain did arise in the middle of your cellar, of the fairest water that ever eye beheld, and when you had tasted of it, you found that your thirst was quenched, and then you caused all your family to drink, who, like you, received all the greatest content imaginable.

Now the interpretation, said Merlin, is this, " Turn home quickly, and dig in the same place where you thought the water sprung, and then you shall find a great quantity of silver whereby you and your family shall be very rich." The man did so, and there he found a vast quantity of gold, according to the saying of young Merlin. The man offered him as much as he pleased of the treasure, but he would not take any thing thereof.

When the seven wise masters saw this, they stood in admiration, and said, " Child, we see so much wisdom in you, that we desire your advice in a matter of great importance." He desiring to know what it was, they said, " The emperor of Rome, as long as he is in his palace, hath his sight without any impediment, but as soon as he is out of the palace, he is quite blind; and if you can restore him to his sight, the emperor will heap great rewards and honour upon you." The child answered, " I both know the cause, and how to remedy it."

They desired that he would go with them to the emperor, and he should be rewarded to his content: the child

went with them, and when they came before the emperor, they said, "My lord, we have brought a child who can tell you the cause of your blindness, and also how you shall recover your sight."

The emperor turning himself to the child, said, "Will you undertake to tell me the cause of my blindness, and the remedy?" The child answered, "My lord, if you will lead me into your bed-chamber, I will tell your majesty what is to be done." And when he was there he ordered the bed on which the emperor slept, to be removed, and then said, he should see wonders. That done, they saw a well smoking, that was fed by seven springs, which much surprised the emperor.

The child said, "You see this well, and without it be dried up, your majesty will never recover your sight." The emperor said, "Child how can this be done?" He answered, Sir, there is but one way to do it. The emperor said, tell us the means, and if possible it shall be done. The child replied, "My lord, the seven springs of the well are emblems of the seven wise masters, who hitherto have tyrannized over you and your subjects, and have made you blind when you are out of your palace, that they, by their extortion might oppress your subjects, and you not see it. But though they have found out the means of blinding you, they know not how to remedy it; therefore follow my advice, and you shall see this well extinct and dried up, and you shall have your sight as you had before."

Then he ordered the emperor to send for one of the masters, pretending to confer with him about what Merlin had told him, and when he was come, he commanded his head presently to be cut off, and one spring upon this quickly disappeared; and then he ordered the rest, one by one, to be sent for and be beheaded, and all the springs with the well entirely vanished, and the emperor was restored to his sight, as at the first: for which great cure he made the child a lord, and gave him great possessions.

Then said the empress, My lord, have you minded what I said? The emperor said, very well.

M O R A L.

Then said the empress, " Sir, you want a Merlin to shew you the abuse of your seven wise masters, who study to take away your sight, that you may not be able to judge of things that you have seen with both your eyes : and in order to this, they so disturb your brains with their fabulous tales, that by degrees they will persuade you, that the villainous actions that Dioclesian hath done, ought not to be punished, but rewarded ; by which blindness, if you suffer yourself thus to be imposed upon, I can think no otherwise, but that they will in time take away your life, as they have already deprived you of the eyes of your understanding, that they may exercise their tyranny on the poor Roman emperor."

" I shall prevent that, says the emperor, for to-morrow morning justice shall take place, not only upon my son, but also upon his masters."

H I S T O R Y XV.

Malquedrake, the fourth master, stops the execution of Dioclesian, by the history of a woman that had wild blood, which her husband taking from her, prevented her design she had to enjoy a priest, and cuckold him.

NEXT morning the emperor commanded without further delay, the sentence to be put in execution, whereupon the fourth master, named Malquedrake, came before the emperor, and having paid his obeisance, the emperor chid him very severely, saying, that it was thro' their evil persuasions, that his son would have committed incest with his wife, and therefore they, as well as the villain his son, should surely die.

" My lord, says the master, you say, that your son would have committed lewdness with your wife, but this is not proved to be true, therefore you ought not to condemn

your son to die, for the words of a simple woman, lest it happen to you worse than it did to a certain old knight that was married to a young lady that was full of bad blood."

"Pray who was that knight and lady, and how runs the story?" said the emperor. The master desiring a reprieve for Dioclesian whilst he told it, and the emperor granting it, he began as followeth:

E X A M P L E.

THERE was an ancient knight, which was much importuned to marry; and at last he consented and took to wife a Roman lady, both rich, young and beautiful, and whom he loved entirely,

After some time, the mother paying her daughter a visit, asked her how she liked the marriage state? she answered, Not at all: for you have given me an old man, says she, fitter to be my father than my husband; and for my part, I had rather lie and eat with a sow than with him; and I cannot help it, but I must needs love another. The mother said, Daughter, God forbid! How long have I been with your father, yet never had such a wicked thought. The daughter answered, that is no wonder; for you both met in your youth, and shared mutual felicities; but I have not the least pleasure or satisfaction from my husband, who is old and impotent, and lies in my bed like an immoveable log, or senseless thing: The mother replied, if you love another, tell me who it is? The daughter answered, I will love a priest. The mother answered, it were better and less sin, for you to love a knight, or 'squire. She said, In a while they will forsake me, and then publish my shame, and so will not a priest; for he will be secret for his own honour, as well as mine, and spiritual men are more true to their lovers than laymen.

Then said the mother, "Daughter, pray take my advice, old folks are crafty and revengeful, and will take liberty themselves, but will not suffer their wives to take the same liberty. It is true, there are some who will bear any thing; now I cannot judge of what complexion your husband is, therefore I think it absolutely convenient to

try his patience before you proceed further." Then the daughter desired to know how she should prove it. The mother answered, " In his orchard he has a beautiful laurel tree, which he much admires, cause that to be cut down whilst he is a hunting, and against his coming home, make him a fire therewith: and if he easily forgive you, then love a priest." She thanked her mother for her advice, and promised to pursue it.

On the next day the knight rode a hunting, and pursuant to her mother's advice, she ordered the gardener to cut down the laurel tree, that she might make a fire therewith to warm her lord withal when he came from hunting; the gardener replied, he durst not, because he knew his master loved that tree more than all the trees in the garden. Whereupon the mistress being angry, gave him many hard speeches, threatening him severely for the little respect and obedience he gave to her commands; and then taking a hatchet, she immediately gave so many strokes on every side, that she soon finished what she had begun; then the branches by her command, were made into faggots, and in the evening against her lord came home, she made a great fire.

The knight astonished to see a fire made of a laurel tree, began to suspect some mischief had been done to his admired tree, and said to the gardener, " I hope this is not my beautiful tree, you know I so much admired?" The gardener replied, My lord, it is: whereupon he began to cry out, that he would so sharply chastise those that had cut down his laurel, that they should never forget it. His wife hearing threatenings, ran into the room, and said unto her husband, " If you will be revenged for that fact, your vengeance must fall on me; for none but I cut down the tree." " Why did you so, says the gentleman?" She answered, " My lord, knowing the weather is very sharp, and that you would be cold when you come home, I did it to make you a comfortable fire; and knowing very well that the branches of a laurel tree will make a good fire, altho' they are green, I caused them to be made into little faggots to burn as you see, and this is the truth of the matter." " You have done very ill, says the gentleman, and for the future take care how you disoblige me; you

was furnished with other wood in the house. Was there no other tree besides the laurel? And assure yourself, if you had cut down all the trees in the garden, I should not have been so troubled as for this one laurel; but since it is done, and cannot be helped, we will say no more of it, but for the future take more care."

Thus was the knight's anger pacified, and having so easily appeased him, she was very joyful to see things succeed so well, and longed for the good hour of imparting it to her mother.

The next day, when the knight was gone to pass away the time in diversion, away hastes the good wife to her mother, and tells her all that had passed, and how good natured her husband had shewed himself, and how ready to forgive.

"It is very well said the mother, but though old men for one time forgive, they double the punishment another time; therefore I advise you to try him once more." "I already says the daughter, suffer such inexpressible tortures for the love of the priest, and I am no longer able to contain myself; therefore dear mother, you must excuse me, for I cannot obey you." The mother said, "I charge you on my blessing, as well as the blessing of your father, that you try him once more, and then if you come off safe, I will allow you to love the priest." After some pause, the daughter said, "It is very troublesome to refrain so long, however I am ready to obey you; and tell me how I shall provoke him again?"

The mother answered, "I know he has a little bitch that he much admires, take that bitch, and kill her before his face, and if he forgive it lightly, then love the priest and welcome." The daughter replied, she would obey this once, and questioned not but to come off as dextrously in this second charge, as she did in the first. So they parted, each going to their respective homes.

Not long after this, the gentleman walking abroad, he took his bitch with him; his wife then cleaned the chamber, and the better to adorn it, she put a very fair and rich covering upon the bed, and sat down by the fire, expect-

ing her husband's return, who at his usual time came home, and sat him down by the fire, being very cold; and the ways being very dirty, the little bitch in that dirty pickle, leaped upon the bed, and bemired all the fair covering that was upon it: whereupon she took the little bitch by the hinder legs, and threw her against the wall with that violence, that she dashed her brains quite out. The knight was so angry at this outrage, that he had like to have proceeded further than words. "My lord, said she, do you see the dirty pickle she has made our bed in, which I have so richly covered?" The knight replied, that he valued his little bitch far above his bed, and which they very well knew.

Then she began to weep and lament in such a piteous manner, expressing her sorrow that she had offended her husband, that the gentleman began to be pacified: only he told her, "That she had done very ill to his bitch, for so small a fault; saying, he forgave her this time; but I advise you for the future, says he, to care how you offend."

In the morning she went to her mother to let her know the last passage, pressing her to let her enjoy the priest as she had promised, seeing she had such certain proof of her husband's patience.

The mother made as if she was very glad, and said, "O my dear daughter, there is no revenge or subtilty above that of old people; therefore, that thou may be very safe, try him once more, and then I promise and swear to you, that if your husband continues in that temper, I will, without any delay, give you the content you desire."

The daughter answered, "It is an inexpressible pain for me to abstain so long from the love of the priest; yet nevertheless, because you have vowed to endeavour my satisfaction for the future, I will once more try my husband, if you will tell me how."

The mother said, "I know, on Sunday next, he intends to have your father and I, and all our friends, with the chiefest persons in the city, to dine with him; and when you are set in your place, and all the dishes are served on the table, fasten the keys at your girdle privately in the

table cloth, and, pretending to have forgot something, arise hastily to fetch it, and by that means throw down the table and all the dishes upon it, and if your husband easily forgives it, I solemnly declare and swear to you, I will never hinder your design again."

The following Sunday, as the mother said, she, her husband, relations, and principal citizens being invited, came to the dinner, and the table being covered with variety of dishes, the young lady fastened her keys unto the table cloth privately, as she was directed, and all of a sudden arose, pretending she had forgot something, and in her rising, she pulled down the table, and all that was upon it.

The knight was troubled in his mind at this exploit, but wisely making the best of it before his guests, and, being very discreet, took no notice of it then, lest he should disturb the company; but caused the table to be taken up, and ordered other provision to be brought. There was plenty of all sorts of victuals; and the day past away in merriment, without thinking of any thing but pastime.

The next morning early, the knight went to a barber, and asked him, "If he was expert in letting of blood?" He answered, "Sir, I am acquainted with all the veins you can name in a man's body." The knight then desiring him to go along with him, and leading him to his lady's chamber, he told her, "That he had brought a man to let her blood." Alas! said she, why must I bleed now, that never was let blood in my life? Besides, I am, I praise God, very well, and lusty. You are too lusty, says her husband, and that makes you so wanton and light headed, at every turn play the fool to my displeasure and your own shame. Do you remember that the other day you hewed down the laurel, which I loved above all the trees in my garden; a little while after you killed my bitch, the most pleasing animal I ever had in my house; and yesterday you threw down the table, to my great shame and disgrace; and if I should suffer you thus to go on, the fourth offence would exceed all the rest; therefore I purpose to cure you, and to that end have brought this barber to do this office. Upon which she began to pray very devoutly for forgiveness, and she would never any more offend him. The

knight told her, " It was in vain to cry for mercy now; and that except she were submissive to his order, he would have her heart's blood."

And after he had bled her till her colour began to change, and she looked very pale, he bid the barber stop it, and then bled her in the arm, which he did to that degree, that at last she swooned away, and then he ordered the barber to stop it: and when she was come a little to herself again, he ordered her to be put to bed, and study for the future to amend her life, protesting, that the next fault should cost her heart's blood.

Her maidens having put her to bed, she bid them, in all haste, send a messenger to her mother, to acquaint her, that she desired to speak with her before she died. The brother guessing at what had happened, and being glad of the correction of her daughter, came quickly to her, and being entered into the chamber, the young lady very faintly said, " O mother! I am almost dead; for I have bled so much, that I think I cannot live. Did I not tell you, said the mother, that old men are subtle and cruel? Will you now have the priest, and I will go immediately for him? The young lady replied in a very low tone, " Do not tell me of the priest, all my fire is extinguished; it is no time now to speak of love, but think of giving me some cordial restorative."

M O R A L.

" From this, Sir, says the master, I infer, that when women gave way to inordinate desires, and cannot be obliged to their satisfaction, revenge, in one kind or other, is often the effect of their resentment; and further, this shews, that good men will bear with small injuries, as the loss of a tree, of a dog, or the like; but the cruelty is too great to deprive an emperor of his only son, whose innocence I question not, but will very soon appear, and those found culpable who design his ruin."

The emperor hearing this notable example, deferred the execution of his son, till the fact was more deliberately ex-

amined ; telling the master, " That, for the sake of the story, the prince should not die that day."

HISTORY XVI.

The empress induceth the emperor to execute Dioclesian, by a story of three wise masters, that ruined a prince and his nation, by pretending to discover hidden treasure.

THE empress hearing the prince was not executed, immediately dressed herself, and caused her coach to be got ready, as though she designed to go into her own country to her father, to complain how she had been abused, and could have no redress.

The servants telling this to the emperor, that the empress was going into her own country, he went unto her, to know the reason of this sudden departure, saying, " I was in hopes you loved me so well, that you desired to be no where in the world but with me."

She answered, " It is true, my lord, I love you more than myself ; but I had rather hear of your death, than see you destroyed by the cunning and subtle devices of your wise masters." The emperor replied, Dear Madam, do not leave me, for the world will certainly censure us both for parting after we have lived together happily so long. Truly, Sir, said the empress, the blame is yours : for, have you not promised me several times, that your son should die for the abuse he offered me, and yet he is alive to my disgrace ; and therefore how can I believe what you say ? The emperor answered, A prince in matters of life and death, ought to proceed with the utmost caution ; and especially where the life of an only son lies at stake, who is heir apparent to the crown, after my decease ; therefore what would you have me to do ? She answered, I will gladly tell you what I would have you to do, in a notable example, which will make you for the future not so willing to hearken to the masters. And then she began as follows.

E X A M P L E.

THERE reigned in Rome, an emperor named Octavius, who was very rich, and loved gold above all things. In his reign the Romans committed many hostilities upon the neighbouring nations, insomuch that many nations entered into an alliance against the Romans, for their preservation. And that which occasioned their reducing other nations to obedience, was the great security they had by the contrivance of one Virgil, that was a great magician; so that if any people did but offer to rebel, it was immediately discovered to them.

The story says, that he made a tower, wherein he placed as many images as there are kingdoms in the world, and in the hand of every image he put a bell; so that if any nation at any time designed to invade the Romans, the image of that province would ring his bell; which the citizens of Rome hearing, armed themselves immediately, and attacked their adversaries; so that the Romans were dreaded throughout the world. He also made for the benefit of the poor, a fire, which yielded so great a heat, that the poor inhabitants came commonly to it, and by the help saved the expence of a fire in their own houses; just opposite to this fire was placed a great statute of brass, holding in his left hand a Turkish bow, which was drawn with his right hand to the very head, ready to let fly; and on the bow was written:

*Touch me not; for if you do,
You will create a deal of woe.*

The image stood there many years: but at last a drunken scholar looking upon the writing, imagined that there was under it a great treasure, and that the superscription was only to frighten people from taking it; whereupon he gave the image such a blow, that it fell to the ground, and immediately the fire was extinguished, and the place became as cold as if there never had been any there. At which the scholar was amazed, and doubting what would become of him if he were known, he ran away, having deprived the city of one of its great commodities, and the poor inhabitants cursed him for it.

After this, three kings that had suffered much by the Romans, consulted how they might revenge themselves of the Romans for it; but one made answer, that it was in vain to attempt it, so long as the tower and images subsisted. Upon this starts up three wise masters, and told them, "That if they would give them conveniences, they would undertake to ruin and destroy the tower and the images." The king demanding what the cost would be, they replied, Three tons of gold.

The king hearing their demands were so small, said to the masters, If God will finish the enchantment, we will easily obtain our ends.

The masters then made choice of three vessels, one of earth, another of brass, and the third of silver, and they filled them with gold as much as they could carry, and departed for Rome, in a frigate which they had provided, where being landed, they went to the city, and being near it, they buried one of the vessels in a place, which they took notice of; then going into the city, they did the same with the other two, burying them near to the principal church of the city, so ordering the earth, that it could not be discerned that the place had been lately digged. This done, and having remained some little time in Rome, they agreed how they should accomplish their design.

And after this manner they effected it. They went early one morning to Octavius, of whom having demanded audience, they told him, "They were three brethren that were skilled in magic, and that they had revealed to them, that the city of Rome abounded much in hidden treasure, and they were come thither to discover it; first with having the licence and permission of his majesty, promising to give him all they found, and that he might bestow on them what part he pleased." The emperor was very glad to hear this news, and immediately agreed to their request; and as he was going to bed, they said, "My lord, this night the eldest of us will have a vision or dream, and the third night he shall shew you what it signifies." The emperor said, God give you a good dream. And when the third day was come, he went early to the emperor, and said, "A treasure will be discovered to us at seven of the clock this morning, without the city, and since we find a treasure without the city, we may very well expect to find greater

within it." The emperor was very joyful to hear what the dreamer said, and told him, "That he would go along with him to see the issue of the business." And away they went towards the place where the masters said the treasure was hidden; and when they came there, the master took an astrolabe and quadrant to find out the place, exactly where the treasure was, and having diligently measured the ground, he bid them dig, being assured that in that place the treasure lay; and it was not long that they had digged, but they discovered a vessel; which the emperor seeing, he himself would take it up; and finding it to be as the master had said, he returned to his palace very well satisfied, giving a great reward to the master, and hoping in a little while, by their means, to be master of a mint of gold.

The next night, another of them told the emperor, that he should have a vision; and next morning he told the emperor, That he had seen a vision, and that in the city, they should find a treasure, twice as much as they found the day before; and accordingly he ordered one to dig near the tower, where they had buried the other two vessels of gold, and after they had digged a while, they discovered two vessels of gold, and both were filled with gold.

This so increased the affection of the king towards these rascally masters, that he did nothing without their advice and counsel; and having given them a great reward, was in great expectation to see the effects of the third master's vision. Accordingly next morning he went unto the emperor, and told him with a smiling countenance, "That not far from hence, he had seen a treasure in a vision, much richer than both the other; and that the place where the treasure lay, was six hundred yards from the palace;" and then by the help of the astrolabe and quadrant, he measured the ground, and found that the treasure lay just under the foundation of the tower where the images and statutes were placed.

The emperor at this saying was a little startled, saying, "God forbid, that I should for the love of gold destroy the tower, which may truly be said to be the prop of the Roman empire." The master answered, That it would be great imprudence to hazard so rich and excellent a treasure as the tower was, which exceed all the treasures in the world, and not only to gain ano-

ther lesser treasure that was hidden the earth; but if a greater treasure might be obtained without damaging the miraculous tower, that then it would be indiscretion to let it lie there, and I dare undertake, says he, to dig under the foundation as deep as you will, without the least prejudice in the world to the tower.

The emperor hearing this, was overjoyed, and in the night orders them to be let into the tower, which with the utmost expedition and diligence they undermined; and very early next morning mounted their horses, and rode away to their own country with great joy; and before they were all out of the city of Rome, the tower fell down; and thus by the villainy of those three masters, was the wonder of the world, and prop of the Roman empire destroyed.

The senators hearing what was done, in great consternation go to the emperor to know the reason of the tower's being destroyed; he answered, "Three treacherous wise masters, who pretended to be soothsayers, persuaded me, that a prodigious quantity of gold was hid under the foundation of the tower, which they would discover without any hurt to the tower or the statutes, and I giving credit to them, they have deceived me."

These masters returning home, were received with much joy, and greatly rewarded; and it was not long after that the enemy came against the Romans, and being unprovided, they took the city, and the emperor Octavius had hardly the liberty to make his escape; who, from being a powerful prince, was reduced to the necessity of turning school-master, and teach publicly in the island of Merlin.

And thus, as the unextinguishable fire was put out by a drunken scholar, so the tower was destroyed by the craft and cunning of three wise masters; and the emperor of Rome forced to retire as a banished man into an island, there to spend the remainder of his miserable life.

M O R A L

"This tower wherein the statutes were, represents your person; for so long as you reign, there is no enemy dares dis-

turb the repose of your people, which your son very well knows; and therefore, with the seven wise masters, and their false narrations and fables, he studies to undermine and destroy you, very well knowing that you are too credulous in hearkening to them. The images are emblems of your five senses, which being infatuated by these wise masters, they quickly destroy you, and let your son upon the imperial throne." The emperor said, You have given me a good example, and I will take care that it may not happen to me as it did to the tower, for my son shall this day taste the bitterness of death. The empress replied, If you do so, your reign will be glorious, and you will have success in all your enterprizes.

HISTORY XVII.

Josephus, the fifth master, prevents the execution of Dioclesian, by a story of one Hippocrates a physician, who out of envy slew his nephew Gallienus, fearing he should be a greater physician than himself.

THE same day the emperor commanded his son to be led to the place of execution, whereupon the fifth master, named Josephus, hastened to the emperor, desiring audience of his majesty; but the emperor very angrily told him, That he deserved death, and that he should speedily have his deserts; the master replied, That they had never shewed the prince any ill example; neither did they ever perceive him inclinable to such crimes as were all alledged against him. As to his silence, says the master, that proceeds from his great wisdom, as your majesty will find in a few days, when he will be able to speak for himself; but that he would have committed incest with the empress, is a crime, that such a wise prince as he is, would certainly detest, and therefore I hope your majesty will not believe it, for if you give credit to the accusations of your lady, and put your son to death, who is the only heir of your empire, your majesty will not be able to escape the divine vengeance, which pursues the authors of unjust sentences, as it did Hippocrates for the death of his nephew Gallienus. The emperor said, I would gladly hear that story; the master an-

swered, what will it avail to tell your majesty this story, to deter you from putting your son to death, if he should be executed in the mean while? But if you please to suspend the death of your son, I will recite the example for your majesty, and afterwards you may do your pleasure. The emperor ordering his son to be brought back, the master began as followeth.

EXAMPLE.

THERE was once a famous physician named Hippocrates, who in learning and experience excelled all others of the faculty. He had a nephew named Gallienus, who was in skill, experience, and practice, equal to his uncle. His uncle envying him, and fearing in time he would excel him, endeavoured to hide from his knowledge every thing he could, lest he should arrive to a greater perfection in physic than himself; which Gallienus observing, applied himself more earnestly to the study of it; supplying the defects caused by his uncle's envy, by his wonderful industry, and this so much the more troubled his envious uncle.

About this time it happened that the king of Hungary sent a messenger to Hippocrates to cure his son, but Hippocrates being old, excused himself, and sent his nephew Gallienus, whom he knew sufficient for this cure; and when Gallienus came before the king, he was handsomely received by the king and queen; and that they might lose no time, the king conducted the physician to his son, and when he had felt his pulse, and made his observation on the distemper, he desired to speak with the queen in private, and then desired to know of her. 'Who was the father of the child? She answered, Sir, do you think that any but the king is his father? Gallienus answered, the king is not his father. She replied, take heed what you say. Gallienus said, If you do not tell me truly who is his father, I cannot cure your son, so he was going quite away: when she perceived this, she took an oath of him to be secret in what she should tell him, and then blushing thus began.

'Sir, I have lived along with the king, without any child, and therefore am accounted barren, and slighted by all people;

and upon this I purposed to know whether the defect was in me or my husband. Whereupon I seeing the miller one day come into the court, to bring corn to the granary, I caused him to enter into my closet, where he had to do with me several times, and by that means I had the son by him.'

Then said Gallienus smilingly, 'Fear not, madam, that I shall reveal the secret, and now I question not but to cure your son.' And after divers remedies which he gave the sick prince, and causing him to be nourished with gross compound meats, according to his natural constitution, he recovered; and when the child was well, after many thanks, and large presents both from the king and queen, he returned home.

When he was come home, he acquainted Hippocrates with his success, whereupon he asked him, what he prescribed? Gallienus told him, compounds. Then said Hippocrates, 'The queen is not virtuous, and faithful to her husband. His nephew replied, That was true.'

Hippocrates, instead of taking pleasure in his nephew's performance he conceived a mortal hatred against him, doubting that the skill of his nephew would diminish his, so he purposed privately to kill him; and one day taking him with him into his garden, Hippocrates said, 'I see that herb is of extraordinary virtue, stoop down and pluck it up.' Gallienus did so, whereupon the envious old man drew out his knife, and as he stooped down, he stabbed him, and buried him privately in the same place where he had killed him.

It happened after this Hippocrates fell sick of the bloody flux so violently bad that all his skill and experience signified nothing. His former scholars hearing this, came to visit him, and tried if they could do him any good; but all was to no purpose, Hippocrates perceiving this, commanded them to fill a great tub to the brim with water, and ordered them to make a hundred holes in it, and when they had done so, not a drop of water ran out; whereupon he said, 'No more virtue comes out of the herbs than there does water out the tub; therefore all you do for me signifies nothing, but I must die.' Then he confessed the just judgment of God was upon him, for murdering his nephew.

Gallienus, whom had he been alive, could have cured me; and when he had said this he turned towards the wall and expired.

The emperor then said, what hurt had it been to Hippocrates if Gallienus had lived? The master answered, It had been better for Hippocrates, that at that time he had not died.

M O R A L.

'The application, Sir, said the master, is easy. It shews, that no man ought to do any thing in anger or hastily; lest afterwards they should repent it, as Hippocrates did, Sir, says the master, You have proposed to put your son to death on the report of your wife, but I desire you would consider what you do, and against whom; being assured that in the conclusion you will find your son is innocent of the fact alledged against him, of which at present you think he is guilty. And, my lord, this is a matter of the greatest moment, and therefore this weighty affair well becomes the wisdom of your years, and royalty of your person to consider well what you do; for you may have more wives, but possibly never such a son as this, whose wit and ability is sufficient to preserve your majesty from danger. The emperor taking great notice of what the master said, and the notableness of his discourse; this, and natural affection together, so wrought upon him, that he ordered the execution that day against Dioclesian to be stopped.

H I S T O R Y XVIII.

The empress prevails with the emperor to execute Dioclesian, by a story of a prince that was ruined by the knavery of his wife masters.

THE inconstancy and instability of mankind, appears in the emperor Pontianus, who had no sooner resolved, upon any thing, but at the discourse of the adverse party he changed his mind.

Josephus having prevailed for the prince's life, the empress grew so fretful, that the emperor took great notice of it, and said, 'My dear lady why are you so impatient? She answered, 'My lord, how can I forbear, that am the only daughter of a king, and your wife, that has been most barbarously abused even in your palace, and presence; and though you have promised to revenge my cause, by punishing the criminal, yet you do not perform it.'

The emperor said, I do not know what to do. You persuade me to put my son to death, and the masters dissuade me from it; and how to act in this affair, and come at the truth, I know not.

Then said the empress, This is the cause of my complaint, That you believe the masters more than me, nay, more than your own eyes; for which reason it will happen unto you as it did to a king of Persia, who was ruined by the wise masters.

I pray you, said the emperor, relate to me all that happened to this king, and I assure you, you shall see yourself revenged both of Dioclesian and his masters, sooner than you expect. And thus having comforted the empress, she began her narrative after this manner,

E X A M P L E.

THERE was a prince of Persia, named Flamentin, who being desirous to enlarge his kingdom, began a war upon his neighbours, and so pursued his victories, that in the end he conquered all the adjoining countries, and came to the confines of Chaldea, hoping to reduce that kingdom as he had done the rest of their neighbours; and having raised a great army, he entered into the country of Chaldea, and put all he met to the sword. The Chaldeans hearing this, they forsook their little towns, and all fled to their strongest city named Hur, where they resolved to defend themselves, purposing to lose their lives rather than yield to the Persians. The city was so closely besieged, that it was impossible to issue out but with great difficulty, and that by the way of a mountain, which was adjoining to it. The siege continued several months, and the Persians finding they lost not their courage, nor wanting any

provisions, consulted with the three wise masters what they had best to do.

Now these wise masters knowing that the Chaldeans had brought all the treasure into the city Hur, resolved to betray their king, which they effected after this manner. They all three intreated the king to permit them to depart from the camp for some days, to celebrate a sacrifice, in order to discover by the communication of spirits, what means they must use to reduce the Chaldeans to the necessity of yielding. To this the king consented, intreating them to be diligent to their sacrifices in the purposes aforesaid.

These wise masters leaving the camp, advised the king of Persia to attempt nothing against the city until their return, only to keep it closely besieged, and to take care of his own camp. This done they travelled into the mountain, where they remained until night, and then went toward the city, and being perceived by the centinels, who asked, who comes there? They answered friends: and that they should conduct them to the king, to acquaint him with a matter of great importance. The guard seeing that they were but three, permitted them to enter the city, and they went to the king to acquaint him with their arrival, who caused them to come before him presently, that he might know their business: they being before the king desired private audience, and then retiring into a chamber, they declared what they were saying, 'That the great compassion which they had for the poor inhabitants of the city of Hur, had moved them to come thither to advertise the king, that if they might be recompensed equal to their desert, they would cause the siege to be raised, and make their enemy to leave the country of Chaldea.' The king hearing this, and perceiving the design of these masters was to get money, offered them thirty thousand pounds: the masters were contented, and bid the king encourage his people, for within five days the siege by their means should be raised; which they performed as you shall hear presently.

In the city of Hur was a very large and high tower. The masters intending to play the project on this tower, caused an image to be made of a gigantic bigness, covering the same with burning glasses and looking glasses of several colours, wrought together in marvellous order; then they made two

golden wings, which gave great lustre to the image, and painted two swords of a bloody colour, that shined very clearly. They provided also artificial fire-works, to make a great noise like thunder and lightning,

All things thus provided and ordered, two of the philosophers turned the way that they came, and the third stayed in the city to execute their project. The next morning, the master that stayed behind, put on his gigantic habit, and placed the golden wings on his shoulders, and put a great crown of gold on his head, and in each hand held a bloody sword. This done, with the wild fire he made a great noise, with flashing and cracking, as if the whole city of Hur had been on fire; and in the midst of the flaming and thundering, the master appears on the top of the tower, in the habit described, seeming to be of very large stature and size, exceeding human proportionable, and the sun beams struck directly on the glasses, and dazzled the eyes of the beholders. After the wise master had for some time spread his wings, and fluttered with them, he began to brandish and flourish both his bloody swords, so that he seemed to the beholders to be fighting.

The Persians seeing this strange and dismal sight, were terrified; not knowing what should occasion it. In the midst of these passages, the two other wise masters, who were in the mountain, came running into the camp, and going directly to the king's tent, cried out, 'They were all dead men. Why?' said the king. 'Do you not see, sir, said they, the God of the Chaldeans is descended from heaven to defend them? So that if we stay here any longer, we shall all be destroyed: therefore it is necessary for us to flee, lest we enrage this God, and thereby lose our lives, as our companion hath done, who having seen the apparition of that God, and being desirous to appease his fury with certain new sacrifices, which he offered, was suddenly slain in the mountain by a thunder bolt, which we seeing, made all possible haste to acquaint you, that if you do not this day depart the place, that none of your camp will escape.'

And thereupon the king and all began to flee, giving as much credit to these masters, as if they had been gods, so that in an hour's time the siege was raised. The besieged who were in arms, and ready to sally out, seeing their enemies fly, fell

on their rear, and charged them so briskly, that they made as great a slaughter as they pleased, and took so many prisoners, that it was wonderful; for the poor Persians fled without any order, thinking the God of the Chaldeans was still behind them, so that very few escaped.

The pursuit being finished, the Chaldeans returned to their city with great riches, for all the baggage of the Persians was left in the camp. The wise masters facing about, took the way of the mountain, and from thence returned to the city of Hur, where they were highly welcomed and rewarded according to the agreement: and thus was the king of Persia, destroyed by these treacherous masters, for the sake of money.

M O R A L.

'As the king of Persia was deceived and ruined by his wise masters, so your seven wise masters design to serve you who by their craft and subtilty delude you, and in the end will betray you, that your son may reign in your empire. The emperor answered, that shall not be, for to-morrow Dioclesian shall die.' And accordingly he ordered his son to be executed.'

H I S T O R Y XIX.

Cleophes, the sixth master, prevents the execution of Dioclesian, by a story of a woman that persuaded her husband to murder three knights and a lawyer.

THE sixth master, named Cleophes, hearing what the emperor had decreed, hastened to the court, and saluted the emperor in a humble manner. The emperor, with an angry voice, told him, that he and the rest of the deceitful masters should certainly be put to death for debauching his only son. The master replied, that if his majesty would have patience, in three days time he questioned not but his son would speak and clear himself of all the accusations laid to his charge: and therefore if you put him to death for the words of your wife, without doubt it will happen to you as it did to a knight,

who gave so much ear to his wife, that he was tied to a horse's tail, drawn through the city, and hanged on a gallows. The emperor said, "For the love of God, tell me that example."

EXAMPLE.

THERE was once an emperor of Rome, that had three knights whom he loved entirely, and in the same city was a knight that had married a beautiful lady, whom he loved and doated upon very much, as you do on the empress. The lady had such a sweet charming voice, that all that heard her were smitten with it. Amongst the rest, one of the knights happened to ride that way where she lived, who was so ravished with her beauty and voice, that he immediately fell in love with her; so going in, he revealed his passion to her, and demanded what he should give to sleep by her side one night? She answered, one hundred pounds; then said the knight, appoint the time and I will give it you; she answered, when I see a convenient time I will send for you, sir. The next day she sung in the same place, and the second knight came that way, who being likewise smitten with her, promised her one hundred pounds upon the same account. The third day, by accident, came the other knight, to whom she also consented on the same terms. These three knights so secretly agreed with the lady, that not one of them knew of the design of the other.

After this, the lady told her husband she had a matter of great importance to reveal unto him, and if he would follow her direction, they should live in pomp and splendor all their days. He promising he would, she said, the emperor's three favourites are fallen in love with me, and unknown to each other, have promised me one hundred pounds each of them to lie with me; to obtain which, without polluting myself, I advise you, Sir, to stand behind the gate with your sword drawn, and as they come one after another, slay them, and so we shall have three hundred pounds without any man's knowledge. The knight answered, that murder seldom passed undiscovered, and we must expect if it is discovered, to die the most shameful death imaginable. She replied, I will begin the work, and do you proceed, and fear nothing. And at last her arguments prevailed with her husband, so that he consented.

The appointed time being come, and one of the knights having entered the house and delivered his one hundred pounds, her husband was ready to receive him, but in a fatal manner; for with a naked sword he run him through, that he dropt down dead: the first being thus dispatched, it was not long before the second came, who fared no better than the first: and the third also underwent the same fate. Having finished the butchery, they conveyed the murdered bodies into a secret chamber.

The murdered had a brother, who was commander of the watch of the city, and with his attendants, going his circuits, was called in by his sister, telling him, that she had a matter of great importance to impart to him: upon this, he sent away his attendants, and then bid her speak boldly without fear, assuring her, he would assist her to the utmost of his power. She said, Yesterday, a knight an acquaintance of my husband's, coming to visit him in a friendly manner, after some words, in which the knight reflected upon me, they fell at such variance, that my husband slew him, whose body remains in the house unburied, and that without your assistance, we know not how to convey it away." Well, sister, replied he, I will rid you of this trouble; help me to a sack, and I will put him into it, and carry him on my back, and throw him into the river Tyber, whose streams will quickly convey him into the sea, so that you shall hear no more of him.

Which accordingly he did, and then returning to his sister, he asked her for some of her best wine, saying, He had thrown the body into the sea, and he would engage, by that time it was carried far enough, and that it would never be found out. She pretending to go for wine, went into the next room, and hastily, as it were in amaze, cries out, O Lord, brother, I am undone: for the knight you carried to the river, is returned. The brother astonished at this strange adventure, said, Give him me again, and I will see if he can return any more; so taking the body of the second knight, supposing he had been the first, he went to the river, and with a stone sunk him.

That done, he went again to his sister, and said, Now fill me up a glass of wine, for I have now sunk him so deep.

that he will never rise again till the day of judgment. She hearing this, ran to fetch a bottle of wine; but hastily, and as much affrighted, cries out, O Lord! brother, he is risen again, and come out of the sea. Her brother, more surprized than before, said, What devil is this that I have cast into the water twice, and yet he is come again? Deliver him to me the third time, and I'll prevent his coming again. Then she gave him the third knight, which he believed was the first, and he went without the city into a forest, and making a great fire, cast him therein: and when he was almost burnt, he went a little distance to do the deed of nature; in the mean time a knight chanced to ride that way, and seeing a fire, and the weather being cold and raw, he drew near to it to warm himself; and in that posture did the lady's brother find him when he returned, whereupon he asked, What he was? He answered, I am a knight. Then said the brother, Thou a knight! thou art a devil: for first I cast thee into the water: then after that, with a great stone I sunk thee: and the third time I put thee into the fire, supposing that thou hadst been burnt, and yet thou standest here. And thereupon he seized upon the travelling knight, and threw him, horse and all, into the fire, and there staid till they were quite burned.

After this, he returned to his sister's house, telling her what he had done, and how, after he had burnt him, he found him again by the fire on horseback, and consumed them both: and by this the sister perceived he had burnt a fourth person. She seemed to admire at it; and having treated her brother with victuals and good wine, and many thanks, he departed.

After this manner she served several wooers, and amongst the rest came a little lawyer, who agreed to give her three hundred pounds for one night's lodging. At the time appointed, the lawyer came to her house, and delivered the money; but so soon as he attempted to take his pleasure with her, her husband laid on him a lusty blow, between his neck and shoulders, with a large cudgel, so that he kicked up his heels, and went to plead his cause in the other world.

Then they consulted what to do with his body; which not being wounded, her husband took him on his back, and

carried him to the lawyer's necessary house, and set him on the seat, as if he had been there easing his body; thus having placed him, he left him.

The lawyer's bed-fellow knowing somewhat of this mighty appointment, sat up for him, and having occasion to go to the vault, saw one sitting there, and making a near approach, perceived it was his bed-fellow, and calling him by his name, he answered not: he then believing that he was asleep, pulled him by the coat, and down dropped the lawyer on the floor; and, upon a little search, he found that he was dead.

Our lawyer's bed-fellow upon this, supposed who had murdered him, and taking the lawyer on his back, carried him to the knight's house, and set him leaning against the door, and then returned home again.

Our murderers having occasion, about midnight, to go to the door, opening it, down fell the lawyer into the house, which she perceiving, calls her husband, and acquaints him with the business; upon this, he was as much troubled as his wife: but knowing there was a necessity to do somewhat, resolves to carry the body and throw it into the river. And as he walked along the street, he heard a noise of people walking and talking, whom by their discourse, he perceived were shop-lifters, or house-breakers, and that they had met with a prize, which they had in a sack, so resolved to leave it under a stall, and retire to a tavern to drink. Our murderer, who hid himself, that they might not see him, perceiving they were gone, came to the place, and finding a sack that had two fitches of bacon in it, he took them out of the sack and put the dead lawyer in it, and placing it under the stall, went home laden with the fitches of bacon. His wife seeing him come home with something on his back, was affrighted, thinking he had brought back the body of the lawyer; but he getting in doors, undeceived her, shewing her the bacon, and acquainting her with all that had happened; she understanding that they were enriched with another prize, went to bed well pleased that evening.

The rogues that had stole the bacon, having drank too long, they had not money enough to pay their reckoning;

so they told the landlord, that if he would buy some bacon of them, they would enlarge the reckoning; the landlord told them he would give them the market price with all his heart; wherupon one goes and fetches it, and setting down the load, they opened the sack; but instead of bacon, the lawyer's head appears. This amazed them all, but especially the landlord, who cried out, they had murdered some neighbour. They knew not what to say, but desired the landlord to be patient, and they would tell him the whole story; so related it to him, how they had it in such a place, a chandler's back-house, which indeed they had plundered, and thither they would carry it back again. The vintner, thinking he might come into trouble, and perhaps be counted a party concerned, was contented; so they carried the sack to the corn-chandler's house, and left it where they found it.

The chandler that morning calling up his servant, to carry corn to the mill to be ground; the servant had a mind to a breakfast, and a rasher of bacon was what he desired; so goes to cut a rasher, and opening the sack, he got hold of the lawyer's head, which so affrighted him, that he cried out. His Master coming to know the matter, he shewed him what he had got; the master concluded that they had took the bacon, and left the dead man; and to be rid of him, they agreed that he should carry him towards the mill, and by the way drop or bury him. The servant consented to what the master said; but falling into company that went the same way, had not the opportunity; so being come to the mill, he hunted for a place where to put the dead body, and espying sack loads of corn of the miller's, going to market in a cart, and it being dark, the chandler's man took his sack wherein the lawyer was, and shifted it out with meal, so made an exchange, and laid the sack with the lawyer and meal on the cart, taking the other sack, and laying it on his own horse, and so returned home.

And now our dead lawyer is on the miller's cart, and carried to market; which being exposed to sale, who should come to buy meal, but the knight and his lady that had killed the lawyer.

The woman opens a sack of meal, and buys it, but wanting another sack, the miller told her, the next to it was the same for quantity and goodness; but she would see it; whereupon

putting in her hand to draw out some meal; she caught hold of the lawyer's hair, she upon this tells the miller be designed to cheat her with some worse commodities than meal; wherefore to be sure, some of the meal being taken out, and the lawyer's head appearing, she cried out, O Lord! husband, the lawyer you killed, is come again. This saying was taken notice of, and they were had before a magistrate, where they confessed the fact, as also the murder of the three knights, for which they were sentenced to die, and were accordingly executed.

M O R A L.

By this we may learn what strange creatures some women are. This woman seemed to value and preserve her chastity, yet she was guilty of a greater crime, murder. Therefore we ought not to give credit to some people's pretences to virtue, for they may be guilty of some vice that exceeds it. Whereupon the emperor replied, My son shall not die this day. The master gave him thanks, and took his leave, and departed.

H I S T O R Y XX.

The empress induceth the emperor to execute Dioclesian, by a story of a king that gave away his own wife to his steward unwittingly, by giving way to jealousy.

WHEN the empress heard that the prince was still living, she began to rave like one distracted, crying, What shall I do? unhappy woman that I am! I cannot survive the shame that is done me with impunity, therefore I will destroy myself. God forbid, said the emperor, that you should think of such a wicked action; have a little patience, and you shall have justice done you. You have promised me so, answered the empress, many times, and yet I am not avenged; therefore it will certainly happen to you as it did to a king and his steward. The emperor desiring to hear that example, she said, It will signify nothing, for to-morrow the seventh master will plead for your son, and save him from death as the other six have done; and

and you hearing your son speak, you will be so ravished therewith, that all the love you had for me will be forgotten. That is impossible, said the emperor; therefore, my dear, harbour no such thoughts. Then, my lord, said she, I will relate the story to you; perhaps it may preserve both you and me from destruction. The emperor bidding her proceed, she began as followeth.

EXAMPLE.

THERE was a certain king that loved his wife to that degree, that he grew jealous of her, and inclosed her in a fair and stately castle. About the same time, a valiant knight, that lived in a far country, dreamed he saw one of the fairest queens that ever eyes beheld, by whose means he could arrive at great honours.

This dream made such an impression upon his fancy, that he was very confident that he should know the lady again that he dreamed of, if ever he should see her. Also the same night the queen dreamed of the knight, and yet they were altogether strangers to each other.

The knight, upon the vision, determined to travel until he found her out; and after he had travelled through divers regions, at last he came into the city where the queen was kept in a strong castle by her jealous husband.

The knight one day walking near the castle where the queen was kept, by chance she looked out of a window and espied him, whom she immediately recollected she had seen in her dream. The knight also by chance, lifting up his eyes, perceived a lady at the window, whom his mind gave him, was she of whom he had dreamed; whereupon he often walked about the castle, which she perceiving, wrote a letter, and secretly dropt it from the casement of her chamber window, and he having perused it fully, understood the lady's mind, so waited for an opportunity to get into her apartment.

This gentleman, in a little time, grew famous at tilt and tournament, wherein he performed such valiant actions, that the fame thereof reached the king's ear, who sent for the knight,

and conferred great honours upon him, and constituted one of his privy council, and was so taken with his person and conversation that he gave him leave to build an apartment near the walls of the castle, that he might be always near at hand to attend upon his majesty, in case of need.

The knight employed many workmen on this occasion, and having finished the work, he agreed with one of the most ingenious workmen to make him a privy door into the queen's lodging, and when he had done, he rewarded the workman largely, and sent him privately away into another country, because he should not make it known. After which, going into the queen's apartment, he paid his respects to her; and then they discoursed of many things, particularly of the wonderful means they came acquainted by, each informing the other of their dreams, to their no small admiration. The night approaching, he besought the queen to let him sleep by her till the morning, and after some denial, for custom sake, she consented.

In the morning the knight returned to his lodging, having given the queen satisfaction to her heart's content. After this, the queen's coyness entirely vanished, and the knight went and enjoyed her as often as he pleased, and as a token of her love to him, she gave him her wedding ring. The king on the other hand, little dreaming of the knight's treachery, made him comptroller of his house, and general of his forces.

It happened one day that the king was disposed to ride a hunting, so he immediately sends for his general to accompany him, and having spent the day in chasing wild beasts, they were so weary that the king sat down by a fountain to rest; and the general sitting next the king, fell asleep, with the ring upon his finger that the queen had given him; the king perceiving it, knew it well. When the general awakened, and believing that the king had seen the ring, he pretended to be very sick, and said, My honoured lord, I find myself so sick, that if I do not make haste to my lodging, and procure a present remedy, I am a dead man; therefore I desire leave to go home. The king answered, Go, dear friend, in the name of God, and see there be nothing wanting to procure thy health, that my court or kingdom can afford.

The general accordingly took leave of the king, and rode to his lodging, and from thence hastened to the queen, and gave her the ring again, telling her how the king, he believed, had seen it on his finger as he was asleep, and that he was forced to feign himself very sick, to get a pretence to return to her with the ring, that she might have it ready to shew the king, if he should inquire after it; and then he took his leave of her, and returned to his lodging.

Not long after, the king came to visit the queen, and she received him very affectionately, as usual, and after a little talk, the king said, My dear, let me see your wedding ring, for I have a great desire to see it. She answered, My best beloved, why do you desire to see it? He replied, It is my pleasure, therefore shew it me presently. Then she went to her cabinet, and taking out the ring, brought it to her husband, and when he had viewed it, he was half ashamed, and said, My dear, pardon my unkind suspicion, for I verily thought I had seen the ring upon my general's finger. She answered, My lord, one ring may be like another, and workmen seldom make one piece of work, but another is able to do the same: But, however, I pray God forgive you for suspecting me. You know the strength of the tower, and keep the keys yourself, and therefore can have no just cause to do it, though I were ever so ill inclined, as God is my witness, I am not.

Not long after, the General made a great feast, and invited the king to dine with him, saying, My honoured lord, a lady who is my love, being come from my native country, to live with me in your majesty's dominions, I have made a feast, and humbly beg that your majesty will honour me with your royal presence this day at dinner. The king readily complying with his request, the general went to the queen the secret way, and said, My dear lady, I beseech you come into my apartment this way, and dress yourself richly in jewels and ornaments, after the custom of my country; for I have invited the king to dine with me, pretending that my love is come from my own country to live with me, and I would have you sit at table, and entertain the king, in quality of my elected spouse. The queen answered, She was ready to act according to his desire, and so apparelled herself after the custom of the general's country. And the king soon after arriving, she received him with the greatest gallantry and complaisance imaginable; and

the king on the other hand, welcomed her into his territories, and praising her beauty and deportment, he sat down at the table, and made the disguised queen sit next. At several times, nevertheless, it entered into the king's thoughts that this was his wife, as indeed it was, but by reason of her strange habit and deportment, she remained undiscovered; and when the dinner was over, and the dishes taken away, the general desired the lady to sing before the king; accordingly she sung a love song, which amazed the king the more, saying to himself Surely this must be my queen! But how can it be, when I have the keys of the tower in my own custody.

And thus was the king divided in his thoughts, till at length, being no longer able to contain himself, he ordered the general to take away the table, saying, Something troubled his mind, and he must be gone. The general officiously desired to know if he could administer any consolation to his majesty, and what it was that disturbed him? The lady also seemed troubled, and said, If your majesty will please to continue here we will order a masquerade, and make it our study to divert your mind, and give your majesty all the delight and diversion this place can afford. This rather adding to the king's suspicion and displeasure, he angrily said, Take away the table, for I can continue here no longer, till I have resolved my mind. Then the general instantly obeyed the king, and returned him thanks for the honour he had done him.

The king going away, immediately went into the castle, to see whether his queen was there, or no; but in the mean time, she went in at the privy door, and stripping off her uppermost vesture, and putting herself into the same habit he left her attired with. When the king found her there, and in the same dress he had left her in before, contrary to expectation, he kindly embraced her, and said, My general having made a feast, for joy of the arrival of his lady, who came from her own country to my court after him, he invited me to honour him with my presence at dinner, which I did; and when I came there, and beheld the lady, she seemed so much like you in person, behaviour, stature, and speech, that I could hardly have patience to the end of the feast to see whether you were here or not. My lord, replied the queen, why do you entertain such jealousies of my virtue? what reason have you to

suspect me? the tower is so strong that you know there is no
 entering it, and you keep the keys yourself, so that it is im-
 possible to deceive you, if I were less virtuous than I am, or
 were inclinable to be vicious. You may remember, my lord,
 continued she, in some seeming passion, that you suspected me,
 because your general had a ring like that you gave me; and
 do you still continue to suspect me? is it not sufficient to debar
 me from liberty, but you must needs be jealous besides?
 Therefore, I tell you, my lord, if you do not forsake your
 jealousy, and release me from this confinement before three
 days are expired, I will end my days here. The king an-
 swered, My dear lady, your complaint is just, and I own
 myself guilty; but let me beg your patience for a few days,
 and upon the word of a prince, you shall be set at liberty.
 And after a loving salute, he took his leave of her.

Before two days were at an end, the general came to the
 king, and said, My lord, I have served your majesty some
 time, and I have now thoughts of returning to my native coun-
 try, and one favour I beg of your majesty is, that you will be
 pleased to bestow your female servant upon your male, and I
 shall boast of the honour your majesty will do hereby, so long
 as I live. The king immediately granted his request, and told
 him, If he required much greater favours than that, he would
 grant them.

The appointed day of marriage being come, the king at-
 tended by his principal nobility, and dressed in his royal robes,
 went to the church, where the priest was ready to solemnize the
 nuptials. The queen by this time, being dressed in the knight's
 lodging, after the manner of his country, was led by two
 noblemen to the church, when the priest demanded, Who shall
 give this lady to that knight? The king answered, I will give
 her to him freely. So taking her by the hand, he put the
 queen's hand into the hand of the general; and the priest,
 after the orders of the church, united them in the bands of
 wedlock. When all the rites were solemnized, the general said
 to the king, My lord, the ship that I intend to go in to my
 native country, is now ready to sail, therefore I humbly beseech
 your majesty to accompany my spouse thereto, and admonish
 her to love and honour me, as she is obliged; and I question
 not but I shall find her very regardful of your majesty's admo-

missions and commands. The king readily agreed to his request, and with his nobility accompanied them to the ship. Then the king addressing himself to the queen, said, My dear friend, hearken to my counsel, I beseech you, and it will turn to your advantage. My dear friend has now married you, and done you the greatest honour that he is capable of: wherefore, observe, I beseech you, that you love, honour and obey him above all men, and that you be faithful to him according to your matrimonial contract. And then the king saluted her, and delivered her to his general, saying, My blessing be with you both, and the Lord keep and conduct you safe to your own country.

The general and his lady bowed to the king, and gave him thanks for all the favours that he had heaped upon them, and so committing them to the Almighty, they entered into the ship.

The mariners hoisted sail before the wind, and in a short space the king lost sight of the ship; and then with his attendants, he returned to his castle, and immediately went to his tower, and having unlocked the door, and searched up and down, at last he espied the private door. So he guessed how he was deceived: whereupon he fell into despair, and a disease seized him that took him off.

M O R A L.

My lord, you find what confidence the King had in his general, and yet he deceived him of his queen. You put the same confidence in your wife masters, who endeavour to destroy me your wife, and you also. You see with your own eyes how your son hath abused me, and yet you suffer them to defend him in it, and insult me with impunity. Therefore I fear it will happen to you worse than it did to the king I have spoken of.

The emperor said, For this example's sake, to-morrow my son shall die.

HISTORY XXI.

Eraustus, the seventh wise master, stops the execution of Dioclesian, by the story of an Ephesian matron; shewing what great love she pretended to have for her husband, and how barbarously she used him when he was dead, to get another.

THE next day the emperor commanded his son to be led to execution: whereupon Eraustus, the seventh wise master, hastened to the emperor's court, and there before his majesty, he bowed reverently, according to his duty.

But the emperor, with great indignation, said, You have sent my son home lewd and dumb, whereas you had him from me innocent and dutiful; and for this reason you and your companions, with my rebellious son, shall surely die.

The master answered, Most noble emperor, the time is not long betwixt this and to-morrow noon, and then, by the grace of God, you shall hear him speak, and declare the truth of all things to your majesty's satisfaction: but if he do not, then take his life, and the lives of us all.

The emperor said, If I could but hear my son speak, and prove his innocence, I would not desire to live longer. The master answered, This you will certainly see, if you but stay this little time, and the debate betwixt the empress and us, will then be justly decided; but if you suffer him to be put to death through the words of your wife, it will happen to you worse than it did to the knight who died for a little blood, which he saw his wife shed; to whose corpse afterwards she was most unnatural.

The emperor said, Pray let me hear that story. The master answered, let your son be called back again, and I will give your majesty such an example, as you shall remember all your life, of the wretched folly and imbecility of female nature. The emperor replied, I will again suspend the execution of my son, upon condition, that to-morrow I hear him speak as you

have promised. The master said, Do that, my lord, for it shall certainly be so. And then he began his story as followeth:

E X A M P L E.

THERE was a knight who married a beautiful lady, whom he loved entirely. It happened one day, that this knight and his lady, playing a game at chess, she, by chance, struck her hand, and made it bleed a little, at the sight of which, her husband fell to the ground in a swoon; his wife seeing that, cast cold water upon his face, and he came a little to himself, but the fright so surprized him, that he died immediately, to the unspeakable grief of his wife; who, after his funeral obsequies were performed, resolved that it should not be long ere her spirit should be remitted to gain that content in the other world, which had been ravished from her in this: and to perfect this resolution, she made a vow, That she would never depart from the grave of her husband, but as a turtle dove, for the love of him, live and die there.

Her friends could by no means alter her resolution; whereupon they built her a little house near the grave, and providing it with all things necessary, left her there, thinking, that in some little time she would be weary of being alone, and so return again to her relations.

In the city was a law, that if an offender was hanged, the sheriff all night should watch the dead body, and if he let the body be stolen, the sheriff should lose his life, and forfeit his estate. It happened a short time after the knight was dead, that a notorious malefactor was hanged for a robbery, so the sheriff was obliged to watch the body, and it being in the winter, and the weather very cold, he was almost frozen to death; but looking about him, perceived a smoke to ascend from a little house in the church yard, to which he went in haste, and knocked at the door. The mournful lady asked who was there? The sheriff replied, I am the sheriff, that has endured so much cold, that I am almost starved to death, and must certainly perish, unless you pity my condition, and suffer me to warm myself. She said, I fear if I should let you in, you will be talking of my misfortune, and aggravate my affliction: but

he answered, For God's sake, dear madam, let me warm myself, and I will say nothing that shall afflict or disturb you.

Then she let him in, and when he had warmed himself, he said, Dear madam, I would, with your permission, speak one word to you. She answered, Sir, say what you please. Then he said to her, Madam, you are a beautiful lady, in the prime of your youth; were it not more convenient for you to dwell at home, than to waste yourself here with sorrow and weeping. She said, Sir, if you did but know the occasion, you would alter your opinion; and then related the story to him. Madam, says he, I am very sorry for your misfortune. And then gave her thanks for the benefit of her fire, and returned to the gallows, admiring the gratitude and love of the forlorn widow to her deceased husband: but to his amazement he found the thief was stolen away, whereupon he cried out bitterly, Woe, woe is me! What shall I do? for my life and estate are forfeited to the king. And being distracted with horror, he returns to the widow, beats his breast, and tears his hair, stamps on the ground, and uses all the gestures of a distracted person; whereupon the poor widow, perceiving the affliction he laboured under, asked him the occasion of all his lamentation.

Madam, says he, I suppose you are not ignorant what the laws of the city are, that when any man is hanged, and stolen from the gallows, the sheriff's life and goods are in the king's hands. Now it happened, while I was here, and warmed me, the thief was stolen away: and therefore, for the love of God, give me your advice upon this weighty occasion.

She perceiving that he was a likely, handsome man, answered, Forbear weeping, and follow my advice, and all shall be well. He desired her to proceed. Says she, In the first place, you must promise me marriage. He replied, That would be the greatest pleasure in the world to him, next to preserving his life.

Then she vowed in the presence of God, that she accepted him for a husband: and he vowed the same, to accept of her for a wife. Well, now sir, says she, we must take my husband out of the grave, who, God help him, died for love of me, and hang him upon the gallows instead of the thief, for now he is dead, and that's all he is good for.

The sheriff approving of the proposition, went and opened the sepulchre, and drew him out; but says he, Madam, what shall we do now? For the thief had two of teeth beat out, and I fear that may cause a discovery. Upon this, without any hesitation, she replied, take a stone, and beat out two of his teeth. The sheriff replied, I have not a heart to do it, the compassion of my nature is so great.

She readily answered, He was a tender and kind husband unto me, but yet you shall see I can do this for the love of you. Then presently she took a stone and beat out two of his teeth, and bid him hang him up instead of the thief.

Alas! said the sheriff, What shall we do now? the thief in taking, was wounded, and lost both his ears. Then, said she, lend me your knife, and you shall see what I can do for the love of you: And then she cut off both his ears, and then said, now hang him up.

The sheriff said, I fear to hang him up yet; for the thief was gelt; the widow answered, I never met with such a fearful hen-hearted man as you are, to be so conscientious and timorous, when the matter may so easily be done, take a knife and castrate him: the sheriff said, I desire to be excused, for I can't so inhumanly mangle the body of any person, though it were to save my life. He was, says she, the very best of husbands to me; and yet for the love of you, you shall see that I am not afraid to do it.

Then taking the knife, she, without any remorse, ungratefully castrated him, for whose sake she had vowed to live as the turtle-dove, and said, Now take him and hang him up without dread. And accordingly they hung him on the gibbet; and so the sheriff was delivered thro' the management of the lady.

Which done, he and his incomparable mistress secretly retired to consult further, not only of their present safety, but also how they might continue their mutual happiness, which fortune had so unexpectedly begun betwixt them. The master having finished this example, proceeded to make the following

M O R A L.

From hence we may learn the instability of all sublunary things, but more particularly, the changeableness and levity of women; of whom there is no great heed to be taken, especially when they are in their passions, as I may conclude now the empress is; but whether her passion be love or hatred, I shall not examine: but I believe, in the conclusion, you will find her present hatred is the effect of former love; but let that be as it will, said the master, to-morrow you shall hear him speak; and then he will shew you the truth of the contest betwixt us and the empress.

And so having obtained a reprieve of the emperor, till the next day, he took his leave with great humility, and departed.

It happened the next night, as the emperor lay in bed, he was so troubled in mind, that he could not sleep till a little before break of day, and his eyes being closed, he dreamed, that there issued from his reins a dove white as snow. He being joyful, purposed to have it carefully nourished, and as it grew larger, it daily increased in beauty. Then by and by he perceived a serpent come into his palace, which was very beautiful; contrary to the nature of this animal, and he was so in love with it, that sometimes he put it in his bosom, and at other times lay with it; he also perceived, that so soon as this serpent saw the young dove was so fair, he took pleasure in it, and by all means endeavoured to have its company. The dove at first was very well contented, and respected the serpent, but seeing that the serpent kissed it, and endeavoured by all means to couple with it, the dove with horror and anger, fled from the serpent. The serpent seeing itself disdained, endeavoured by all means to kill the bird; and the emperor himself took the serpent's part, and also assisted to kill the bird: and yet he thought the poor dove made no defence, only looked up to heaven, without speaking, as if from thence it expected assistance. He also saw, that as the cruel serpent was about to kill the dove, seven animals appeared one by one to defend the bird from the serpent, fighting for the dove, one after another, that the battle lasted

seven days. The emperor seeing the engagement, seemed to favour the dove against the serpent, when the serpent had the worst; and on the contrary, when the serpent had the better, he altered his mind, and was pleased to help to kill the dove, in love to the serpent.

In a word, he perceived the serpent cast forth all his poison with great rage and fury, and that he so ordered the seven animals and the dove, which all the time had made no defence, that they seemed to be at the last gasp for their lives; and yet, nevertheless, the dove appeared with so good a grace, that without fighting he overcomes the serpent. Upon this, the emperor then seemed to have so much hatred against the serpent, as he had formerly love for it, very much repenting that he had so persecuted the dove, at the desire of so horrible a beast as was the serpent. He also thought, that all the city of Rome made bonfires for the deliverance and victory of the dove; so that nothing was heard through the whole city but rejoicings.

In the conclusion, the noise which the people made at these bonfires, awakened the emperor, and then he began to consider of his dream, but could not then comprehend the meaning of it; but it left a lasting impression upon his mind. With these thoughts he arose, and after him the empress, to whom every minute seemed to be a year, so desirous was she to be satisfied in the death of the innocent Dioclesian, and the seven wise masters, who took his part, to maintain the just quarrel of their disciple.

HISTORY XXI.

How Dioclesian, the Emperor's son, complained of the Empress and defended himself.

THE term of days being expired, in which the prince was to speak, he sent to the emperor to desire audience of his majesty, that he might vindicate himself from the aspersion cast upon him by the empress.

The emperor was overjoyed to hear that his son spake, and ordered him to be brought before him, which was done. He appeared clothed in purple, and cloth of gold, his mas-

ters going with him, on on his right hand, and another on his left, and the other five followed, with twelve men playing before him on musical instruments. And being come to the emperor's palace, the senators and nobility were sent for, to hear what defence Dioclesian would make for himself. The concourse of people was very numerous on that occasion, and after silence was proclaimed, the prince said, O my dear lord, before I defend myself, I beseech you to order the empress, with all her maids of honour, to be present. The emperor accordingly sent for the empress without delay; who, with her ladies, appeared accordingly.

Then said the prince, I desire that they would stand in a row, that I may see them: when this was done, My lords, says the prince, behold the chamber-maid that standeth there in green, who is known to be the empress's particular favorite; command her to be unclothed before us all, that we may see what she is. The emperor answered, that would be a shame to the company, to have a naked woman standing before us. The prince replied, if it be a woman, it is my shame; if not, the shame will be upon the empress. When she was unclothed, she appeared to be a man, to the astonishment of all present.

Then the prince said to his father, Behold, my lord, this adulterer hath many a night lain with your wife, and defiled your bed, and him the empress loved above all your other servants, which thing you did not know.

And hereupon the emperor flew in a great passion, like one that was born mad, and immediately ordered that they should be burnt. But the prince said, I beseech your majesty to defer the sentence till I have made my innocence appear, and have cleared myself of all the crimes she has alledged against me. Then said the emperor, My dear son, I commit a judgment into your hands, do as you see proper: and then the prince proceeded to defend himself in the following words:

The SPEECH of Prince DIOCLESIAN.

WHEN your imperial majesty was pleased to send for me, at the empress's earnest request, then I with my masters consulted the stars, by which I perceived, that if I

should have spoken to you, or any person living, within the space of seven days, I should die a most shameful death, and for that cause only did I forbear to speak till now. And whereas the empress has most unjustly accused me, that I would have ravished her, it is a most gross scandal and falsity, for she most incestuously endeavoured to provoke me to defile your bed; and when she could not obtain her desire, (her own hand-writing will make my asseveration appear) she took pen, ink, and paper, and desired me to write whether I would consent or no; I assured her, by writing, that I would by no means consent to defile my father's bed; upon this she began to tear her clothes, and scratch her visage, till she bled and cried out, that I would have forced her, and that I had most inhumanly torn her flesh.

When the emperor heard this, he beheld her with the utmost indignation, and said, O wicked woman! was not thy concealed adultery sufficient to satisfy thy lecherous appetite, but thou must endeavour to debauch my son?

The empress fell at the emperor's feet, and implored mercy; but the emperor said, O thou cursed and unhappy woman! thou art not worthy to receive any mercy; for thou hast deserved to die in three respects: First, in that thou hast committed adultery. Secondly, In that thou most lasciviously hast provoked my son to a most abominable sin, and laid the crime falsely and unjustly upon him. Thirdly and lastly, In that thou hast every day incited me by thy false tales, to put my son to death; therefore the law shall have its course against thee, and thou shalt suffer according to thy deserts.

Dioclesian then said to the emperor, Most honoured father, you have been often told by the empress, that I would dethrone you by the assistance of my masters; whereas I solemnly declare they never taught me any thing but unlimited passive obedience to your majesty's pleasure; nor have I ever meditated any thing but how I might become useful and serviceable to your majesty's sacred person; which I shall continue to do, and earnestly desire that God would spare your majesty's life, for a multitude of years; and it shall be my constant endeavour to make your crown sit easy upon yourself, while you shall have all the glory: and give me leave to say, honoured sir, the empress has been inspired

with envy, like that of a certain nobleman, who threw his son into the sea, because he said he should be greater than his father, though Providence thought fit to preserve him, and make him not only a greater lord, but also the joy and comfort of his parents.

Then said the emperor, Blessed be the Almighty, who has given me such a son! Tell me this example, that I may be delighted with further proofs of thy wisdom. Then silence being commanded, the prince began as followeth,

HISTORY XXIII.

Dioclesian having cleared himself, gives an example of a man that threw his son into the sea for interpreting a nightingale's song, which imported, That he was to be king, and his father and mother should hold a bason of water and a towel to wash his hands; and how strangely it came to pass, by his interpreting the noise of the crows. With an account of the great friendship between king Alexander and Lodowick the emperor.

IN the famous city of Carthage, there was a nobleman that had but one son, named Alexander, whom he educated in all sorts of literature: the child as he grew in years, increased in wisdom and beauty; and when he had been seven years with a master, his father sent for him home, as you sent for me: the youth being arrived his father rejoiced exceedingly to see him so well improved in the graces of person and behaviour, and so well accomplished in all manner of learning.

It happened upon a day, as the nobleman and his lady and son were sitting at dinner, a nightingale sat upon a tree before the window, and began to sing so sweetly, that the nobleman was ravished with the harmony, and said, What would I give to understand the meaning of her song? If you

are desirous to know that, says the son, I can give you that satisfaction. The warbling of the nightingale respects my future grandeur; signifying, that I shall become a great prince, and honoured of all men, and that my father shall bring me water to wash my hands, and my mother shall hold the towel.

The father was enraged at this interpretation, and said, This augury shall never take effect; and so took his son and threw him into the sea, saying, Lie there interpreter. The youth being able to swim, with much ado got to land. And after he had been four days without meat or drink, on the fifth day, a ship coming by, he hailed the mariners, and desired them, for the love of God, to preserve his life. The mariners seeing a fair young man, had compassion on him, and sent out the long boat to fetch him on board: and carrying him into Egypt, sold him to a duke, who finding him to be faithful, ingenious, and very beautiful, took a great liking to him.

Upon a time the king of the realm was in great trouble; and this was his affliction; that as often as he went out of the palace, three crows would present themselves before him, crying out with such terrible voices that he was almost distracted; and being very desirous of being released, he caused a proclamation to be issued throughout his kingdom, that if any one could remedy the croak of the crows, he would give him his daughter to be his wife, and make him his successor in his kingdom.

Alexander hearing this, acquainted the duke, That he would engage his life, that he gave the meaning, and would rid the king of the noise. Upon this, the duke told the king, that he had brought a young man that could deliver him from the trouble of the crows. The king then promised the young man upon his royal word, that he would perform the promise of his proclamation. Then Alexander said, My lord, there were two crows, a male and a female, who brought forth a young one, and being in a country where was great famine, the female left the young raven to shift for itself; the male with great difficulty and labour provided for the young one during the famine; and when it was over, the female returned, and would needs accompany the young one, which the male would not permit, alledging her unpa-

turalness during the time of the famine ; and this being the debate, they are come to you, that by your royal authority you would be pleased to put an end to their difference, by your definitive sentence ; assuring you Sir, that so soon as you shall pronounce sentence, they will be gone, and trouble you no farther,

Then said the king aloud, Because the young raven was sustained by the male in its necessity, therefore I adjudge, that the young raven shall continue with the male and not with the female. When the ravens heard this sentence, they flew away, without ever returning again, to the great wonder of all the spectators,

This done, the king ran and embraced young Alexander and owned him for his son, promising him his daughter and his kingdom after his decease. And from that time young alexander lived with the king, and was beloved and admired both for his gallant deportment and valour, especially at the exercise of tilt and tournament, wherein he always won the prize ; so that in all Egypt his equal was not to be found ; neither could the hardest question be put to him, but he would give the true solution thereof,

At that time there was an emperor, named Titus, who excelled in magnificence and politeness all other emperors, kings, and princes in the world, so that many lords and princes of foreign nations resorted thither, who desired to be well accomplished. Alexander hearing the fame of this emperor, desired leave to travel to his court. The king granted his request but desired him to stay till honourable provision were made for him, that he might appear in an equipage befitting the son of a king ; and that before he went, he would perform what at first he intended in marrying his daughter.

To which Alexander answered, If your majesty think fit, I will defer the consummation of our nuptials till my return ; when, I hope I shall bring so good a fame with me, as may in part merit the illustrious title of your son-in-law, and thereby render me more acceptable to your daughter for her husband. The king consenting to this, Alexander took with him a magnificent equipage, and went to the emperor's court.

When he was arrived there, he paid his respects to the emperor, and said, If it please your imperial majesty, I am son and heir to the king of Egypt, and am come to serve your majesty, if it please you to accept of me. The emperor replied, He was heartily welcome; and made him his carver. And Alexander behaved himself so well, that he was beloved by all the court.

And soon after came the French king's son named Lodowick, to serve the emperor, and to learn courtly and genteel behaviour. The emperor received him honourably, and made him his cup-bearer; and those two princes were so like one another, that they could hardly be distinguished; and as their persons were alike so was their love to each other equally true.

The emperor had only one daughter, named Florentina, who was very beautiful, and the heiress of his empire; who, although she kept a court by herself, yet every day the emperor sent her a dish from his own table. Alexander being the bearer of this dish of meat, the princess was so much pleased with his gallantry and good behaviour, that she began to be in love with him.

Upon a day, Alexander happened to be absent, and Lodowick supplied his place; and having seen the princess, he was so smitten, that immediately he fell in love with her. She perceiving it was not Alexander, demanded his name and quality? He answered, He was the king's son of France, and his name was Lodowick; and then having performed his office, he with a profound respect retired.

At night, Lodowick being very sick, Alexander demanded the cause. He answered, He was very sick, but knew not what ailed him. Alexander viewing him well, said, The cause of your distemper I know full well; for to-day, when you carried the meat to the emperor's daughter, you beheld her so fervently, that her beauty has wounded your heart. He answered, Ah! Alexander, all the physicians in the world could not more truly have judged the cause of my distemper; but I fear it will be my death. Alexander replied, My dear friend, do not despair, for I will assist you to the utmost of my power.

The next morning Alexander went to a jeweller, and bought a rich jewel unknown to Lodowick, and presenting it to the princess, he said, Madam, the son of the most Christian king of France, having beheld your princely beauty, is taken sick, even to death, and desired me to present this to your highness in his name, beseeching you to accept of it as a token of love. The princess in a great passion, replied, Would you have me to encourage the love of any person without the consent and direction of my father? No, I will not, and you may assure yourself that you shall never receive any thanks for your message; and I would have you never propose the like to me, as you value my resentment.

Alexander hearing this, making a low obeisance, retired; and the next day went again to the jeweller, and bought more jewels, of greater value, and presented them to the princess in the name of Lodowick. When she saw this noble present fixing her eyes on Alexander, she said, I wonder that you have so often seen and spoke with me, and yet have never done your own errand, to speak for yourself but for another. He answered, Madam, my birth is not to be compared to your highness, and besides I never was yet wounded with the love of any body, but the daughter of the king of Egypt, to whom I am betrothed; and as I am united in the bonds of friendship with the prince of France, and know that his birth and quality is royal in all respects, I think myself obliged to do him all the services in my power; and therefore now, I beseech your imperial highness to have compassion on him, and grant him a return in affection, lest he die for the love of you, and it be for ever laid to your cruelty. She answered, Go your way, for at this time I will give you no answer.

Alexander accordingly departed, and on the third day he made another visit, presenting her with a girdle that was beset with diamonds, which was of more value than both the other presents, and offered it to her in the name of Lodowick. The princess being conquered at the sight of such a present, said to Alexander, Tell Lodowick, that if he come to my chamber about eleven at night, he shall find the door open. Alexander, overjoyed, took his leave of the princess, and went to Lodowick, and said, My dear friend, be cheerful, for I have conquered the princess for you, and

this night at eleven o'clock, you will have admittance into her chamber.

When Lodowick heard this, overjoyed at the news, he started up as though he had awakened out of his sleep, and was so well, that he went at the time appointed, with Alexander, to the chamber of the princess, who received him very kindly, and from that time she so admired him, that he had freedom to be with her, when, and as often as he pleased.

Lodowick made the best use of this opportunity, and visited her so often, that in process of time, it came to the ears of the lords and gentlemen of the court, who conspired among themselves how they might intrap him with the princess; which Alexander understanding, he as often frustrated and disappointed their contrivances by his vigilance and valour.

The case stood thus, when letters came to Alexander, of the death of the king of Egypt, desiring his return to take possession of the kingdom; this news he declared to Lodowick and the empress, and then to the emperor; but withal acquainting his imperial majesty. That if he required it he was ready to quit his realm to serve his majesty. The emperor answered, He was very sorrowful for his departure, but that it did not become him or any generous prince, to hinder the advancement of his servants, but rather to prefer them. He readily therefore consented that he should go; and then congratulated him upon his accession to his throne. After this, he took his leave of the whole court, most of which were troubled for his departure, for he was very much beloved.

Lodowick and the princess Florentina, by the emperor's free consent, accompanied Alexander seven miles; and then, after strict embraces, and a solemn, though sorrowful farewell, these friends and lovers separated. Alexander having first given Lodowick and the princess a caution, lest any coming in his room, should discover their amours, and betray them, which might tend to the hazard of their lives

and reputations. Lodowick answered, Never fear, dear friend, but I will take all the care imaginable; and then taking a ring from his finger, he gave it to Alexander to keep in remembrance of the great love and friendship he had for him. Alexander replied, At your request I will receive the ring; but it is impossible to forget you. If I had no other remembrance but for our former happy friendship. And then committing them to God, he embraced them both, and continued his journey for Egypt.

Not long after the king of Spain's son, named Guido, was received by the emperor in the room of Alexander, and was assigned Alexander's apartment; who perceiving Lodowick, was displeased at his being in Alexander's chamber, conceived a mortal hatred against him, which obliged Lodowick to be cautious and secret in his visits to the princess. But Guido being in the same apartment with Lodowick, he could not conceal the matter so closely, but it was observed by Guido, who indeed had a design on the princess himself, but perceiving the favour she shewed to Lodowick, and guessing how he came acquainted with her, he waited only for an opportunity to be revenged on them both.

Nor was it long before an opportunity presented to shew his malice; for as the emperor was one day praising Alexander's valour, wisdom, and good humour, Guido said, My lord, he is not worthy of those commendations you bestow upon him; for he hath been a traitor in your house. The emperor surprised at this, hastily said, Tell me how? Guido answered, you have but one only daughter, and Lodowick hath defiled her, and goeth to her as often as he pleaseth. The emperor much incensed at this intelligence, in a great passion, sent for Lodowick, and told him what he was accused of, assuring him, that if it was proved, he should die a shameful death.

Lodowick pleaded innocency, and offered to prove it in battle against his accuser; to which Guido consenting, the emperor assigned them the day of combat.

This was very unpleasant to prince Lodowick, but much more to the princess, when he acquainted her therewith;

but they seeing how their affairs stood, advised how to prevent the danger. For Guido was a valiant man, and Lodowick had but small skill in arms, and therefore they consulted what to do. Their result was this: he advised Lodowick with all speed to tell the emperor, That he had received letters from the king his father, that he was sick, and therefore desired leave to depart, and to give longer time to the combat; which having obtained, to go immediately to king Alexander, and desire his advice and assistance.

Lodowick followed the directions of the princess, and obtaining leave of the emperor, he travelled to the court of king Alexander, and acquainted him with the occasion of his journey. Alexander was very glad to see him, and desirous of all things to advise and assist him, but knew not how. There is no way but this, replied Lodowick, that return in my behalf, and not being known to be any other than myself, to fight the battie for me. Alexander approved of what his friend had propounded, but they were much straitened for time, in regard it was but eight days to the day prefixed for the combat; and if it was delayed but one day, he could not possibly arrive time enough; and he had invited all the nobility the next day to come to his wedding.

This was such an obstacle as could not be removed nor remedied, and put them to their wits end; but king Alexander being resolved to give an absolute proof of his friendship, and hazard his kingdom, wife, life, and all, rather than his friends should suffer in their honour, he thus contrived the business: That prince Lodowick, in all things resembling Alexander, should stay there, as if it were he, be married to his queen, and hold all the solemnity of the nuptials, but when he was in bed with her, to forbear conversing with her, and that himself would immediately go to the emperor's court, and undertake the combat, and if he obtained the victory, he would suddenly return. This being concluded on, they separated accordingly.

On the next day was solemnized the wedding of prince Lodowick and the queen, as if it had been king Alexander;

and after much feasting, at night he went to bed with the queen; but that he might be true to king Alexander, he laid a naked sword between them, which she much wondered at: however he continued to do so all the time of the absence of his friend.

King Alexander arriving at the imperial court, immediately applied himself to the emperor, telling him, That although his father was very sick, yet honour obliged him to come at the time prefixed, to undertake the appointed combat. The emperor received him kindly, and wished him success; and so he went to his lodging, as if he had been Lodowick; only the princess knowing the difference, who received a private visit from him, wherein he told her in what manner he left his friend, which much afflicted the princess, who stood amazed at this extraordinary instance of the friendship of king Alexander.

The day of battle being come, both the champions entered the field, and before the combat began, the pretended Lodowick, in the presence of the emperor, the princess, and all the nobility, who were there in solemn order assembled, made the following declaration:

That if Guido charged him with incontinence, or too much familiarity with the princess Florentina, the accusation was intirely false, and that he was guilty of a gross untruth and scandal, to the great dishonour of himself, the princess, and of the emperor; and that he was now ready to answer him in single combat, if he insisted upon his accusation, and would not retract what he had said. Guido hearing this declaration, answered, That what he had said was true, and that he was now ready to prove it by dint of sword. And thereupon they mounted their horses, and began the combat with the utmost fury; but it lasted not long; for Alexander being the better warrior, soon vanquished his enemy, and cutting off his head, presented it to the princess, to her exceeding joy, and the great satisfaction of the emperor, and all the court, who applauded the valour of king Alexander supposing him to be Lodowick.

Having thus vindicated the honour of the princess, he desired leave of the emperor soon after to go again, as he pretended to his sick father; which being granted, and having taken leave of his imperial majesty and the princess, he departed, and in a short time arrived in his own kingdom, where he was privately, but joyfully received by prince Lodowick, to whom he gave a full account of the success of his journey. Lodowick, with great joy told him, that he had saved his life, and the princess's; and had laid such an obligation upon him for both, that he should not be able to requite, but with his own life, which he would gladly offer up at any time for his service; acquainting him at the same time, with his behaviour to his queen.

This was the kindness between these two unparalleled friends, whose affection to each other exceeded all that was ever written; as in sequel of this example will be further made appear.

After many reciprocal assurances of constancy and affection to one another, these two friends separated; Lodowick returning to the emperor's court, and Alexander remaining in his own kingdom; neither was it known by any that he had been absent.

When night came, king Alexander went to bed to his queen, and soon after he lay down, he began to kiss and embrace her in an affectionate manner; whereupon she told him, That this was a sudden alteration. As how, said he, because, replied she, you have hitherto been very cautious of coming near me; and have put a naked sword in bed between us, not so much as turning towards me. Oh! my dear lady, said he, that was intended for no harm, only for the performance of a vow which time being expired, I shall for the future make you amends.

The queen seemed to be contented with this excuse, but was so enraged at his former coldness, that she resolved to be revenged on him; and therefore consulted with a lord of the court, who had formerly courted her, to conspire his ruin; and to that end gave him poison, which would

certainly have bereaved him of his life, had he not been of a strong constitution; but although he escaped death, yet the poison had such an effect, that it made him a monstrous leper, in such a manner, that he was abominable to behold; and being abhorred by the queen and subjects, they turned him out of his kingdom, and his wife married this lord aforesaid, who reigned king in his stead.

This was the sad condition of the poor unfortunate Alexander: but on the other side, Lodowick was highly advanced; for his father, the king of France dying; and the emperor likewise deceasing, he married the princess Florentina, and so became king of France, and emperor of Rome at the same time.

King Alexander understanding the good fortune of his friend, was very joyful, and resolved to go to him to seek for relief in this his time of adversity; and therefore putting on hermit's apparel, he travelled to the new emperor's court, where being arrived, he would have entered; but was turned out by the courtiers, who could not endure the sight of so deformed a monster; whereupon he spoke with one of the emperor's servants, desiring him, for the love of God, to do a message for him. The servant being a courteous person, bid him speak what he would have. I desire, said the leper, that you would acquaint the emperor that there is a leper, that desires, for the love of God, and the sake of king Alexander, that he may be admitted to dine this day in the emperor's presence. The servant said to the leper, That his request would certainly be refused; but however he would fulfil his desires; and thereupon went and did his message to the emperor; who hearing the name of his dear friend Alexander, was so charmed therewith, that he presently consented to the leper's request, commanding that he should eat in the hall at a table by himself, and be respected as a person of honour.

Dinner time being come, and the emperor and his courtiers being set at table, the leper was served in the best manner; and when he had eaten, he desired one of the servitors

to go to the emperor, and desired him for king Alexander's sake, to send him a bowl of wine. The servant did as he desired, and the emperor sent him a bowl of wine; the leper receiving it, drank the wine, and taking the ring, which formerly the emperor had given him, put it into the bowl, and desired the servitor to carry it to the emperor; who, seeing the ring, and knowing it, was amazed, believing he should hear something of his friend Alexander. He then commanded that the leper should be attended upon, and conducted him to his own private chamber, that he might speak with him.

His commands were instantly obeyed; and he arising from dinner, went to the leper, little imagining that dismal spectacle was king Alexander. Then he asked him how he came by that ring? Very honestly, replied the leper: I had it of the right owner. Who, said the emperor, of king Alexander? No, replied the leper, of Lodowick, king of France. That cannot be, returned the emperor, for I am that Lodowick, and I gave to none but my dear friend king Alexander. That is confessed, said the leper, and since you call Alexander your dear friend, know that I am that unfortunate king. O what impossibilities do you tell me, says the emperor. Nothing but what is too true, replied the king, with tears in his eyes, which by this time flowed likewise from the emperor's eyes down his cheeks in great abundance.

But having vented his grief, and being fully convinced of the truth of what king Alexander told him, the emperor Lodowick ran to the leprous king, and kissed and embraced him, crying out, O my dear friend! How is it that this great misfortune hath befallen you? You, my lord, replied the king, are the sole occasion of it; though, I must confess, are innocent as to any design in it. How! said the emperor, could I, your friend, be the cause of this misfortune, and yet be innocent? It is most certain, said Alexander, for your honourable friendship to me, when you bedded with my wife, and laid a naked sword between you (the supposing it to be me) hath so enraged her, that she hath revenged herself on me by poison, which hath wrought the

actual effect on me which you see; and to complete my misfortune, she hath married one of my subjects, and they have expelled me out of all my dominions; so that your innocence has really, as I said, occasioned my ruin.

Oh unfortunate wretch that I am, said the emperor, that I should be the occasion of so much evil, that my dear friend, who hath so often hazarded his life for me, should thus be basely requited! I cannot, said the king, however, complain of you, but of fortune, to whom we must all submit. Well, said the emperor, since you are still master of so much virtue, continue it, and hope the best, and I will endeavour to procure you a remedy, if it be in the power of human skill to effect it; and nothing in my dominions shall be wanting that may do you service, and revenge you of your enemies. The good king thanked him, and resolved to continue there unknown to all, to see if there might be any remedy found out for his infirmity.

Accordingly the emperor Lodowick sent for all the ablest physicians he could hear of, promising a very great reward to any that could cure his distemper. But when all was done, they told him, it was not within cure of physic; and that if ever he was healed, it must be by a miracle.

This much afflicted the emperor, who, however, was not discouraged, but resolved still to try all ways for the restoration of his friend; and finding art and physic of no avail, he applied himself to religious persons for their prayers; neither was he wanting in his own, setting apart several days on this occasion for fasting and prayer.

The good king Alexander bore with patience this great calamity, praying fervently to be delivered, if it might stand with the good pleasure of the Almighty, who, in the end was pleased to hear his prayers; and in a vision intimated to him how he might be cured; but was by so strange a means, that he resolved to continue as he was, rather than to attempt it; for the vision imparted, that there was no other way for his recovery, but to be bathed in the blood of two children

of the emperor's, which he had by his beloved empress Florentina, and that the emperor must kill them with his own hands, and afterwards bathe him in their blood.

This was the only remedy prescribed for his malady: but rather purposed to be silent, accounting it unreasonable to kill two innocents to preserve one sinner. But let him resolve what he pleased, it was the pleasure of Heaven to determine otherwise; and as he had given an unparalleled proof of his friendship to the emperor, so the emperor in his turn must retaliate, and indeed, exeed in this great trial upon his natural affection, in preferring his friend before himself, his empress, and his innocent children.

But to proceed.—The emperor still continued his prayer to God, who in a vision, at length told him, That his friend Alexander knew how to be cured. He thereupon goes to him, and desires him to tell him, if he did not know a remedy for his disease.

After much importunity, Alexander told him that he did, and declared the manner how; but wishal dissuaded him from executing it. To which the emperor replied, That since Heaven had prescribed these conditions as his only remedy, and that he could not be cured otherwise, he would dispute no further, but obey what was commanded.

He thereupon immediately went and cut the throats of the two innocents as they were asleep in bed, and saving the blood, bathed his friend's body therewith; who instantly became as clear, and as fair as ever, to the great joy of them both; the emperor praising God for giving him those children that had proved the restoration of his friend's health and beauty, and giving him an opportunity to express his gratitude for the signal services he had done him.

Alexander transported with amasement and affection broke forth into expressions of joyful gratitude, and said, My dear friend, now I see the sincerity of your friendship to me, by

this unparalleled instance of your affection, which all that ever I have done, or shall be able to do in my whole life, will not be sufficient to requite. But it is no small affliction to me, that your great affection could not be expressed but by such a severe trial as this of slaying your two children for my sake.

The emperor answered, My dear Alexander, God may bless me with more children, but I can never more expect such a dear friend; and it is but just, that you have so often saved my life, should have the first fruits devoted to so good an end as your recovery from such a grievous disease, which was brought upon you for the services you have done to me.

King Alexander, being perfectly recovered, it was agreed between the emperor and him, that he should privately leave the court, and go some few miles out of town, and from thence send word of his approach; and that then the emperor with his nobles would meet him, and conduct him to the imperial palace, where he should continue till an army should be raised to recover, and re-instate him in his kingdom.

This proposition pleased king Alexander, and was soon performed; for a few days after, came a messenger to acquaint the emperor of the arrival of king Alexander.

The empress hearing this, expressed the greatest joy imaginable, and proposed, that the emperor and his nobles should go before to meet him, and she and her ladies and gentlewoman would follow, not knowing as yet of the death of her two children.

Accordingly the emperor and empress, with a royal attendance, rode to meet king Alexander, whom they received with the greatest demonstrations of respect and affection; and with great joy conducted him to their palace.

At supper the empress placed the king betwixt the emperor and herself, and expressed all imaginable tokens of her esteem and gratitude to him, which so well pleased the emperor, that he said, Oh! my dearest Florentina, I am

extreamly rejoiced, that you express so much value and affection for our most faithful friend.

The empress answered, I should be very ungrateful, my lord, to forget the generous service his majesty has done for us; and how often, at the hazard of his own life, he has preserved yours, as well as defended both our reputations; by which means your imperial majesty has arrived to the honour and dignity you now enjoy: therefore I should be wanting in the duty and affection I owe to your majesty, if I did not to the utmost of my power, shew the value I have for king Alexander.

Then said the emperor, My beloved Florentina, do you not remember that a deformed leper was at my court lately? I do, said the empress, and a most loathsome creature he was indeed. Suppose, replied the emperor, this leper was our friend king Alexander, and there were no other way to cure him of his leprosy, but by the death of both our children, in whose blood he must be washed, could you for his sake suffer it? It is a very strange question answered the empress; but yet I can from my heart declare, that if I had ten children, I would kill them all with my own hands, rather than our friend king Alexander should continue so loathsome a leper; for we might have more children, but never such a friend as he has been.

The emperor hearing this, was resolved to to make a trial of her constancy, and told her all that had happened, and that her children were dead. Upon which, notwithstanding all her courageous speeches, her natural affection so prevailed, that she sunk down in a swoon; but remedies being used, she soon recovered, and made great lamentation: but God, who never fails to requite those who trust in him, was pleased to reward the emperor's great faithfulness and piety to his friend, with a signal miracle; for no sooner did the attendants of the children hear of their death, but they with great lamentations ran to see them; and when they came where they were, and expected to find them dead, they saw the contrary; for they were alive, and singing songs of praise and thanksgiving; and about their neck, where they were cut, were circles of gold.

This joyful news was quickly brought to the emperor and empress, who was exceeding glad thereof, giving thanks to heaven for this miracle.

Not long after this, the emperor raising a great army, went with Alexander into Egypt, and established him again in the full possession of his realm, putting the queen and her lover to a shameful death.

And now king Alexander being a single man, and that these two friends might be allied by marriage as well as affection, the emperor having one only sister, gave her in marriage to the king; and after having, with great pomp and magnificence, celebrated their nuptials, then he took his leave, and set out for the chief seat of his residence, where he arrived to the great joy of his beloved Florentina.

King Alexander being thus settled in peace, sent a messenger to his father, who had cast him into the sea, to let him know, That the king of Egypt, upon such a day, would be with them, to view those parts of the country for his diversion. His father and mother, who all this time believed their son to be drowned long ago, received the messenger with great honour, and dismissed him with great presents, ordering him to tell the king, That their services should be always devoted to his majesty's pleasure: but they wondered with themselves why so great a king should vouchsafe them the honour of a visit in those parts.

The messenger returning, told the king, who immediately set forward with divers of his nobles: where being arrived, his father and mother fell upon their knees, and with great reverence welcomed him; but he presently took them up, and kissed them very affectionately, and they said, My lord, you do us an honour with your noble presence, which we shall never be able to requite.

When dinner was ready, the father came in with a bason, and the mother with a towel, saying, My lord, dinner is ready, will you be pleased to wash? When the king saw that he smiled to himself, and thought of the song of the nightingale: but he would not suffer them to do any such

service, saying, Your age is to be honoured; and calling a servant, he made him do the office; and then sat down to dinner, placing his father at the right hand, and his mother at the left.

After dinner, the king withdrew into a private chamber, with his father and mother, and sitting down, demanded, If they had any children? They answered, No. The king asked, If they ever had any? They replied, We had one son, but he is dead long ago. The king asked, Of what distemper he died? The father then desired to know, Why his majesty enquired so earnestly after his son? The king answered, I have a reason for it, and therefore desire to know of what death he died.

When he heard that, he was much surprized, and being touched with remorse, fell down upon his knees, and desired his majesty's pardon, and he would divulge the whole truth. The king would not suffer him to kneel, but bid him stand up, and not be afraid, but tell the truth, and he should be pardoned; for I perceive, says the king, That you have put him to death. Then says the father, Mighty prince, we had a son that was both wise and learned: and upon a time as he was set at table, there came a nightingale and perched upon a tree near the window, and sung very melodiously, whose song our son began to interpret, saying, That the bird intimated, That he should be a king, and that I and his mother should hold a basin of water, and a towel to wash and wipe his hands, which so vexed me, that I took him and threw him into the sea. The king answered, What harm would it have been to you if he had had arrived to that grandeur? No harm, my lord, says the father; and it has been the cause of great uneasiness of mind and trouble to me, that I should be guilty of such a rash and wicked action.

You may well call it a rash and wicked action, said the king, to act so cruelly against the dictates of reason, the duty of a parent, and the law of God. And now I will tell you the truth. I am your son that you cast into the sea; but God hath graciously saved me, and by his providence brought me to this estate and dignity.

The father and mother hearing this, and amazed with fear and joy, fell down at his feet, but he affectionately took them up, saying, Fear not, for my exaltation shall be to your glory and advantage. And then he embraced them with great joy, and soon after took them into his kingdom, where they lived magnificently, and ended their days with comfort.

Prince Dioclesian having thus ended his example with the acclamation of all present, he proceeded to make the following short observation, by way of

M O R A L.

By this example we may conclude, that whatsoever hath been once ordained and established above, nothing here below can obstruct or hinder,

And then addressing himself to the emperor, he said, Most honoured lord and father, although God hath endued me with a competent share of wisdom and understanding, it shall not impair your honour and glory, but be wholly employed for the preservation and maintenance of the same, as king Alexander's exaltation tended to promote the glory, honour, and prosperity of his father, as I have plainly shewn: he being honoured with the love of all people, and all the pleasures the world could afford this life,

The emperor having retained all that his son had said, and how every thing had passed, bethought him of his dream, and understanding the truth of the vision that had the night before appeared to him, was fully satisfied of the innocency of Dioclesian, and embracing him, said, My beloved son, I will wholly resign all my empire unto your government; for with the utmost satisfaction I perceive that you are highly worthy of so great a trust: and it is now proper for me, who am advanced in years to quit all affairs, and give myself the pleasure of a peaceful retirement from the distraction of human life.

Dioclesian answered, You shall, my lord, enjoy the ease and satisfaction you desire, but yet retain your imperial

authority and grandeur, without the trouble of it, which according to my duty I will take upon myself, continually studying to make your majesty's reign equally glorious and happy.

HISTORY XXIV.

How the empress and the adulterer were both sentenced and put to death.

PRINCE Dioclesian then demanded sentence upon the empress and her favourite, who were both present, the latter dressed in his female habit; and said, My most gracious lord, I humbly request you to give judgment against the adulterous empress, as you are obliged to do justice to all your good subjects,

First, Because she has endeavoured to commit incest with me.

Secondly, For the wicked and unjust accusations she hath unjustly laid to my charge.

Thirdly, Because she has prostituted her own body and defiled your majesty's bed, with an infamous wretch in woman's habit.

For all which crimes she has certainly incurred the most severe punishments that the law can inflict, and therefore I now demand the same, in the utmost rigour thereof, that that it may be for ever an example to posterity, to deter every one from such wicked actions, and false accusations; and also, that it may be an encouragement to all good men, by shewing, That God never forsakes the innocent, nor suffers the wicked long to triumph over them that trust in him; and that though they may seem a while to suffer, through malice and persecution, yet God never fails to turn the malice of their enemies to their own confusion.

The empress bearing this, threw herself at the emperor's feet, and implored forgiveness, but in vain; for Diocele-

...upon his demand of justice, the judges, after
...gave the following sentence, viz.

...ickedness, adultery, and perfidiousness of the
...visibly condemn her, and therefore we give sen-
...That she shall be drawn through the principal
...of the city upon a sledge, and then be burnt to
...We also adjudge and sentence, That the infa-
...adulterer shall be cut in pieces, and his flesh given
...the dogs, and the fowls of the air."

This sentence was approved, and applauded by the peo-
ple and the emperor, and accordingly put in execution.

Some years after, the emperor died, leaving his crown
and dignity to his son Dioclesian, who made his masters
his chief counsellors, and by their advice governed the
empire with great wisdom and glory, insomuch that he
surpassed all his predecessors in riches, honour, and justice;
and after a long series of happiness, in a good old age, he
ended his days in joy and tranquility, to the praise and
glory of almighty God.

F I N I S

